CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.759
11 March 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 11 March 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Grecu (Romania)

GE.97-60535 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 759th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me at the outset to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Her Excellency Lena Hjelm-Wallén, who will be our first speaker today. We had the privilege of receiving the visit of the Foreign Minister of Sweden last year, and her presence among us today is a further testimony of her personal interest in our work and the abiding importance attached by her Government to the Conference on Disarmament. I am sure that her statement will be followed with great interest by all of us.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Her Excellency Lena Hjelm-Wallén.

Mrs. HJELM-WALLEN (Sweden): Mr. President, may I first of all congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the CD? I would also like to pay my respects to the Secretary-General, Vladimir Petrovsky, and his deputy, Mr. Bensmail, and express our gratitude for the assistance they provide members and observers to the CD.

Profound changes in the security environment have created radically new and positive conditions for building a safer and more secure world. It is not possible to build a sustainable security order and lasting peace on the threat of weapons of mass destruction. The quest for a nuclear-weapon-free world is about fundamental values and political will. It is about the world we want to create for ourselves and future generations, a world where the destructive power of these weapons no longer threatens our civilization.

On 10 September 1996, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by an overwhelming majority and opened it for signature. The Treaty was signed on the very first day by all the five nuclear-weapon States. I had the great pleasure to sign it that day, too, on behalf of Sweden. To date, the Treaty has more than 140 signatory States.

The CTBT constitutes a landmark event in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The solid support for the Treaty testifies to the strong will of the international community to put an end to all nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosion. It confirms that nuclear weapons, pyschologically and politically, have become yesterday's weapons.

We must now ensure the early entry into force of the Treaty. The CTBT was negotiated here in the Conference on Disarmament. I urge those States in the CD that have not already done so to shoulder their responsibility and to sign the Treaty as soon as possible.

The Swedish Government welcomes the results of the resumed first session of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. The decisions taken last week here in Geneva have laid the necessary groundwork for beginning the work in Vienna. Sweden intends to

actively contribute to this work, and I am pleased that Dr. Ola Dahlman has been appointed Chairman of the Working Group in charge of verification issues under the PrepCom.

The CD should now start negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, the cut-off. This is the next urgent task. Already in 1995, the Conference adopted a statement containing a mandate for cut-off negotiations. It also decided to establish an ad hoc committee for this purpose.

The time has now come to proceed to substantive work. I urge all delegations to show the necessary flexibility to get these negotiations started without further delay. It is highly important that the CD meet the expectations placed on it by the international community.

The "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference also call for the immediate commencement and early conclusion of such negotiations. A cut-off treaty would once and for all put a cap on the fissile material available for weapons purposes. It would create further favourable conditions for the reduction of nuclear arsenals. Such a treaty is thus of the highest significance both for continued nuclear disarmament and for nuclear non-proliferation.

Significant steps have been taken in the field of nuclear disarmament. I have in mind the INF Treaty, the START I and II agreements. The nuclear-weapon States have, furthermore, taken important unilateral measures. However, the existing nuclear arsenals are still greatly disproportionate to any actual or conceivable threats. The nuclear disarmament process must therefore continue unabated.

The nuclear-weapon States have, indeed, a great responsibility. A situation where these States insist on the security benefits of nuclear weapons, while reserving to themselves the right to possess such weapons, is not sustainable.

START II should be ratified without delay. This would enable its implementation and pave the way for additional deep reductions of the United States and Russian nuclear arsenals, which in turn would create a basis for the participation of all the nuclear-weapon States in the reduction process. The Swedish Government urges the United States and Russia to spare no efforts to overcome the present difficulties and proceed towards a START III. We hope that the summit meeting later this month between President Clinton and President Yeltsin will give an important impetus to this process.

In August last year, the Canberra Commission delivered its report. The Government of Australia subsequently circulated it in the United Nations General Assembly. It was also presented to the CD earlier this year by the Foreign Minister of Australia, Mr. Alexander Downer.

(Mrs. Hjelm-Wallén, Sweden)

The importance of the Commission's report is that it sets out a way forward through a series of concrete measures towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. These are measures to be taken by the nuclear-weapon States, as well as by the international community. Furthermore they are mutually supportive and can be pursued in parallel. I propose that the CD devote some of its time during this year's session to the consideration of this report. The proposals contained in the report deserve to be explored.

One step proposed by the Canberra Commission is to take nuclear forces off alert. This step could and should be taken immediately by the nuclear-weapon States. Such a measure would greatly reduce the risk of an accidental or unauthorized nuclear weapons launch. It would also constitute an important confidence-building measure. Furthermore, it would facilitate the implementation of another of the Commission's proposals, namely, to remove nuclear warheads from their delivery vehicles.

Sweden believes it would be useful to establish some mechanism within the CD to discuss broader aspects of nuclear disarmament. This could be in the form of an ad hoc committee or a special coordinator or informal plenary meetings devoted to this subject. The form is not important. What matters is to have some kind of mechanism which enables a focused discussion on these issues.

The Swedish Government attaches great importance to the upcoming preparatory work for the next NPT Review Conference in the year 2000. The annual PrepCom meetings will provide an opportunity to review on a regular basis the implementation of the Treaty. However, the work must also be forward-looking.

In particular, the concept of systematic and progressive efforts by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons, must be given a concrete content. The steps must be identified and fully translated into action.

In July last year, the International Court of Justice expressed itself in an advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. It did so at the request of the United Nations General Assembly. The Court stated, inter alia, that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". This unanimous conclusion by the Court constitutes a strong and clear message.

I also wish to draw attention to the recent joint statement made by some 60 retired high-ranking military officers from the United States, Russia and other countries. They stressed that present and planned stockpiles of nuclear weapons are exceedingly large and should now be greatly cut back. Remaining nuclear weapons should be gradually and transparently taken off alert. Long-term international nuclear policy must be based on the declared principle of continuous, complete and irrevocable elimination of nuclear weapons.

(Mrs. Hjelm-Wallén, Sweden)

Their statement is highly significant, not only because of its content but also because of the persons who stand behind the message. It is an important call for intensified efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

Important developments are now taking place in the non-nuclear fields. On 29 April, the Chemical Weapons Convention, negotiated in this forum, will enter into force. This Convention will prohibit an entire category of weapons of mass destruction and provide for the destruction of these weapons. It is a deplorable fact that the United States and Russia - the two declared possessors of chemical weapons - have not yet ratified the Convention. The absence of their ratifications would limit this important international treaty to a non-proliferation regime. This would not be compatible with its overall objective to erase a whole class of weapons of mass destruction from the face of the Earth and could also jeopardize further progress in other areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Swedish Government strongly urges the United States and Russia to shoulder their responsibility and ratify the Convention before its entry into force.

The Swedish Government welcomes the fact that work has now started on the elaboration of a verification regime for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. This is a highly important step for the strengthening of this Convention. The negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group charged with this task should proceed as swiftly as possible. They should aim at the conclusion of the work in 1998.

By their very nature, nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction must be accorded highest priority on the international disarmament agenda. But we must also deal with the fact that every year tens of thousands of persons fall victim to conventional weapons. Anti-personnel landmines belong to this category. We all know the disastrous effects of the use of these weapons.

For the last 15 years, Sweden has neither exported nor produced anti-personnel landmines. Furthermore, Sweden decided last year to prohibit the use of anti-personnel landmines by its armed forces and to destroy its stocks of such mines as soon as possible, but no later than the year 2001.

The international community can no longer permit that civilians - women, men and children - are killed by the thousands every year by these hideous weapons. Nor can it permit that even more victims become disabled for life, often condemned to long suffering and social hardship. Nor can it allow entire countries or regions to become economically paralysed by the vast presence of landmines in their fields and roads. The only effective solution to the landmine crisis is a total ban on APLs. No more, no less.

The international community must spare no efforts to achieve a comprehensive, effective and legally binding international ban, covering production, stockpiling, transfers and use. Partial measures will not solve the problem. We must aim for a total prohibition, and we must achieve this objective as soon as possible. This process should involve the broadest possible range of States, including States particularly plagued by the use of

(Mrs. Hjelm-Wallén, Sweden)

these mines, producers and exporters. Sweden will work actively in all suitable forums. We participate in the Ottawa Process and are ready to do so in the CD.

While working towards a total ban, it is, at the same time, of utmost importance that States adhere to the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. This Protocol places significant new restrictions on the use of all landmines. By standing firmly behind the Protocol, the international community will take an important stride forward in dealing with the scourge of the indiscriminate use of these mines. Last week, the Swedish Government took the decision to submit to Parliament the bill on Sweden's ratification of the amended Protocol. The ratification is foreseen to take place before the end of June.

The international community must also tackle the problem of the approximately 100 million landmines already deployed. It faces, indeed, a humanitarian demining task of gigantic proportions. Ongoing efforts in this field are far too slow, costly and dangerous. New and more efficient methods must be developed. The Swedish Government has decided to establish, later this year, a demining centre which will contribute to international demining efforts and be a focal point for research on, and development of, new demining techniques.

The international community must, furthermore, significantly increase its resources for mine awareness programmes and victim assistance. These are tasks which call for urgent action and to which undivided attention and energy must be devoted.

The existing window of opportunity for carrying the disarmament process forward must be utilized to the fullest extent possible. Work must proceed with a sense of urgency. The CD has an important role to play. This Conference has, indeed, proven its value. The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are impressive achievements in recent years.

Important tasks lie ahead. The CD is already several months into its 1997 session. Political will must now be demonstrated and substantive work started.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden for her important statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see none.

I intend to hold informal open-ended Presidential consultations immediately after this plenary meeting.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held next Thursday, 13 March at 10 a.m. We shall meet in an informal setting after a 10-minute break.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.760
13 March 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 13 March 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Grecu (Romania)

GE.97-60586 (E)

The PRESIDENT: The 760th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is called to order.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of Austria. I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, Ambassador Kreid.

Mr. KREID (Austria): Mr. President, since your term of office is heading towards its conclusion, I not only want to congratulate you on the assumption of your presidency, but I should also like to take this opportunity to thank you for the efforts you have made to sound out possible avenues of compromise among ourselves.

A sober reflection of where we stand tells us that such avenues of compromise are not yet in sight. We have heard more about what divides us than about what unites us. I still believe that it is important to continue defining our positions as we move along. For if it is true that we have not found the common ground on which to build together, it is no less true that our positions have not remained unchanged. There is movement and this means there is creative thinking, and as long as there is creative thinking our chances of coming up with a viable solution are intact.

As others before me, I believe it appropriate to concentrate in my statement on the subject matters which have emerged as priority concerns in our discussions, namely anti-personnel landmines and the various aspects of nuclear disarmament. Let me start with the issue of anti-personnel landmines, where Austria's position can be resumed in one single sentence: We want a total ban and we want it fast. We believe that the momentum created in the wake of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Review Conference in Geneva last year should be used for negotiations on a total ban convention in a format that allows for their successful conclusion before the end of the year.

We are greatly encouraged by the fact that the member countries of the European Union are fully committed to this goal and that the United Nations General Assembly, with 150 votes in favour and none against, adopted last fall a resolution in which urgent and vigorous measures for the conclusion of an effective, legally binding international agreement leading to a comprehensive ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of APLMs are called for. We are also greatly encouraged by the response of Governments to the Canadian initiative, which saw the beginning of a process commanding the support of a growing number of States. This fact became apparent in the meeting held in Vienna from 12 to 14 February. There were 111 participating States, a number which speaks for itself. To be sure, this number does not tell us anything about the views these States hold on the question of a total ban, but it can certainly be interpreted as a strong signal that Governments around the world are alert to the problem and willing to take action.

During the general debate 44 speakers took the floor and an overwhelming majority of them supported the adoption of a total ban convention. In the subsequent exchange of views on the main elements of a draft treaty text about 70 countries intervened and contributed a wealth of proposals. These proposals are being given due consideration in the process of revising the

(Mr. Kreid, Austria)

Austrian tentative draft. It is our intention to send out a revised version of the Austrian draft to all States by the end of March for further comments.

The Vienna meeting did not solve, nor was it meant to solve, the question of where we should negotiate. As we stated earlier, Austria is willing to pursue various tracks provided they hold promise of success. Having carefully registered what has been said and also what has not been said on the subject here in the CD during the last weeks, we have reasons to believe that we are up against some major obstacles in this Conference. Drawing inspiration from Andrew Marvell, I am prompted to say: "Had we but world enough, and time, our hesitations were no crime", but given that the "hidden killers" take a toll of 25,000 victims year by year, and that the fast-track approach commands the support of so many Governments, the CD cannot simply ponder the matter in its customary slow-motion fashion.

We are not willing to submit to a strategy of long-term persuasion complete with trade-offs and linkages and subject to an unpredictable stop-and-go process. We consider the issue as solvable, and it should be solved now, and it should be solved in a straightforward manner. The train is about to leave the station. The CD could still get on it, but it is getting more difficult every moment as impatience is growing.

Of course, there is always a danger that not all of the passengers whom we would have liked to have with us will be on board. But this is a fact we have to live with. Just like the Ottawa Process, the CD could not count on the participation of all the countries directly affected by the evil of anti-personnel landmines either. Thus, we might find ourselves in the unpleasant situation of having, at least for the time being, to forgo universality in order not to end up empty-handed or with ineffective solutions.

We believe, however, in the importance of establishing a universal norm by means of a law-making treaty and we are confident that this treaty will meet with general adherence in due course. This is not the first time in the history of international law that a group of countries decides to go ahead with an agreement which subsequently gains universal validity. Such has been the case with regard to The Hague Conventions as far as humanitarian law is concerned. But there are also examples in the field of disarmament, such as the Partial Test-Ban Treaty, where an initiative taken by a few countries was later endorsed by many others.

One final remark. We do not share the apprehensions of some delegations that the CD must keep away from APLMs because this is a matter of humanitarian law only. True enough, a treaty on APLMs has strong humanitarian components. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fact that banning a defensive weapon carries with it a strong disarmament dimension as well. To recognize from the very beginning this straddling character of the APLM convention seems to us of some importance for its future implementation.

Let me now turn to my second topic, namely nuclear disarmament, and state at the very outset that we have no reason to be despondent as to the progress achieved in this field. Certainly, we have not yet come to the end

of the tunnel, but at least we can see a distant light of hope. This hope is epitomized by the acronyms NPT, CTBT, START I and START II, and by names like Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok or Pelindaba.

It may well be argued that past advances were slow, perhaps even haphazard, lacking in systematic planning and blueprints. But they are nonetheless real, they are nonetheless reassuring, and they tell us, above all, one thing: Let us move on and let us not be too choosy and over-ambitious. Rather, let us take what we can get now. So if we are not able to solve the daunting issue of nuclear disarmament in one great stroke now, let us attend to what is feasible and in doing so add another valuable facet, namely a treaty on fissile material cut-off (FMCT), to this multifaceted edifice.

It is said that an FMCT would not be a genuine disarmament treaty, that it would mainly serve the purpose of nuclear Powers and perpetuate the inequality between the nuclear-weapon haves and have-nots. We believe that this is at least an incomplete, if not an erroneous, view. A cut-off treaty would, in our opinion, create far-reaching effects on nuclear disarmament. It would make existing unilateral commitments of nuclear-weapon States to end their production an obligation under a multilateral treaty and open the door to verification measures. Negotiations would inevitably have to touch upon the question of stockpiles, even if they would remain outside of the treaty, because it is hard to see how a cut-off could be verified without transparency with regard to existing stockpiles. Considering that today nuclear arms competition has shifted from the East-West conflict to other regions of the world, the treaty, by improving transparency and confidence, could attain importance also in a regional context. To borrow the words of an Indian diplomat, an FMCT would "reinforce the trend of moving towards a nuclear-weapon-free culture". It would put a sticker on fissile material for nuclear explosions which would not only read: "Keep off: radioactive radiation", but would also read "This material is not only dangerous, it is superfluous". The excess capacities in plutonium and highly enriched uranium are staggering indeed.

After the end of the East-West confrontation a window of opportunity for nuclear disarmament has opened. As the report of the Canberra Commission states, "it must be exploited quickly or it will be lost. There has been no better opportunity since the beginning of the nuclear age". But the Canberra Commission also approached this subject pragmatically. It proposed to proceed in a step-by-step fashion in order to move in a first phase towards a "low-salience nuclear world".

How could that be reflected in our work? Could we start to negotiate a cut-off and, at the same time, set up some kind of mechanism to examine what nuclear disarmament measures could usefully be negotiated in the CD in addition to, or after the conclusion of, the fissile material cut-off convention, in accordance with the "systematic and progressive" efforts at reduction to which the nuclear-weapon States pledged themselves under the NPT "Principles and objectives"? Those among us who plead for such a course should, however, be fully cognizant of the fact that the very subparagraph 4 (c) of the above-mentioned "Principles and objectives" also

(Mr. Kreid, Austria)

refers to the need for simultaneous pursuit "by all States of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control".

There is a magic word in international negotiations and it is the word balance. To achieve balance, there must be weight on both scales, the nuclear and the conventional. Have we, so far, put sufficient weights in the scales on each side, and if not, should we not try to be a little bit more concerned with living up to our responsibility to make this world a safer and therefore a better place to live in? The newest play by Austria's foremost living writer Peter Handke is entitled "Arming for immortality". Whichever route we follow, without disarming first we cannot hope to come close to this goal.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Austria for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair.

That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see none.

As you are aware, this is the last plenary under my presidency. Therefore, I should like to end my term of office with a few closing remarks.

It has been an honour and an enriching experience for me to preside over this august body, since disarmament is an issue to which my Government attaches great importance. My presidency thus constituted an opportunity to demonstrate once again Romania's will to join those looking for timely, realistic, far-reaching and long-lasting solutions in this field. During last month I was in a position to encourage actively and, sometimes, promote such solutions.

While leading the proceedings, I largely benefited from the wealth of talent and expertise our Conference encapsulates. I should therefore like to thank all of you for your cooperation and readiness to discuss all the complex issues lying in front of the Conference on Disarmament today, as well as for the interesting and constructive suggestions you have put forward during this period.

In my turn, I reciprocated by exerting all my energy, good will and perseverance throughout my entire tenure as President, which happened to coincide with a particularly difficult and frustrating period in the life of our Conference.

For the first time since the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament intensive bilateral consultations were held with all the delegations who have made themselves available for this purpose, in an attempt to reach consensus on a programme of work and institutional arrangements for this session. In my judgement, this way to proceed was the most suited in order to give everybody an opportunity to address outstanding issues facing the Conference directly with the President. Each of those issues was approached on its own merits, a tactic meant to avoid unproductive linkages and to get the Conference out of the current stalemate.

(The President)

Soon after the completion of this round of bilateral talks, I informed the membership about my findings and announced my intention to continue seeking avenues for narrowing down the existing gaps. I did so in all earnestness bilaterally, with groups of delegations, and in two successive rounds of multilateral, open-ended Presidential consultations and, as always, with a grain of pondered optimism.

Although we did not fulfil the expectations we all put in our work, I strongly believe that the exercise was useful to air different opinions, to indicate where divergences lie and to reveal possible ways of compromise.

It seems premature to me to draw conclusions at this stage. Instead, I am convinced that further consultations are needed, maybe in other formats and modalities, by advancing fresh ideas, but aiming at the same result, that is, to alleviate obstacles still lying ahead. I intend to continue consulting delegations up to the very end of my term of office.

I do not want to conclude my statement without reiterating my gratitude to the group coordinators and the delegation of China for their constant availability, the support and advice they have given me. A special word of thanks also goes to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and all the secretariat for the friendly and effective manner in which they have helped us in our endeavours.

Finally, I wish Ambassador Grigori Berdennikov of the Russian Federation every success in the task he will be carrying out as of next week, and I should like to assure him of my full cooperation.

This concludes my closing remarks and I thank you for your attention.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 20 March at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.761
20 March 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Thursday, 20 March 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Berdennikov (Russian Federation)

GE.97-60744 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I declare open the 761st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First of all I should like to express gratitude to my predecessors in the Chair, Ambassador Sun of the Republic of Korea and Mr. Grecu from Romania, for all the efforts they made to get today's meeting off to a smooth start. I would also like, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to extend a very warm welcome to the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Norway, Mrs. Siri Bjerke, who will be the first speaker at today's meeting. Her presence among us yet again today testifies to the continued interest of her Government in our work and the importance it attaches to the multilateral approach to arms control and disarmament.

I also have on my list of speakers today the representatives of Italy, Switzerland, Iran and the United States of America.

As we all know, two of our distinguished colleagues, Ambassadors S. Ledogar of the United States and A. Vattani of Italy, will soon be leaving the Conference. Ambassador Ledogar has represented his country in this Conference for more than seven years with remarkable diplomatic skill and talent. We all remember his outstanding personal contribution to the negotiations on the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, and we give him his due for his human qualities. Ambassador Vattani successfully steered the Conference at a difficult time, and we all owe him a debt of gratitude for his efforts to lay the ground for substantive work at the start of the 1995 session. I am sure I speak on behalf of all of us in wishing Ambassadors Ledogar and Vattani and their families happiness and every success for the future.

Before giving the floor to the speakers on the list, I should like in my capacity as representative of the Russian Federation to read out a letter addressed to the participants in the Conference by the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, E. Primakov, in connection with the accession of a representative of Russia to the post of President of the CD.

"Greetings to the participants in the session of the Conference on Disarmament.

"The activities of the Conference on Disarmament - the sole forum in which practical talks on disarmament issues are conducted on a multilateral basis and in a global framework - are followed with attention and interest in Russia. Our country strives to contribute to the success of the work of the Conference, whose achievements have earned it well-deserved authority in the eyes of the world community. They include such important international instruments in the field of arms limitation and disarmament as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, etc.

"I should like to assure the participants in the Conference that, in the post of President, Russia will do its utmost to ensure the success of the work of this forum."

(The President)

I am sure that this message reflects the importance which Russia attaches to the work of the CD in the present situation.

(continued in English)

It gives me pleasure to now give the floor to the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Norway, Mrs. Siri Bjerke.

Mrs. BJERKE (Norway): May I first congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of the support of the Norwegian Government? I also take this opportunity to thank Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky for his contribution as Secretary-General to the work of this Conference.

This is the first time that I have the honour to address the CD since Norway became a full member of the Conference. Finally we are able to take part in the consultations and negotiations on global disarmament and non-proliferation issues within the CD as an equal partner. It remains our conviction that the same right should be granted to all countries that express the wish to join the Conference. The CD derives its legitimacy from the assumption that it is a universal and representative negotiating body. But it is neither global, nor fully representative, if countries that have a legitimate stake in the issues before us do not have the same opportunity to safeguard their interests as those who currently are members.

The end of the cold war has made possible major achievements in global non-proliferation and disarmament. We now have a unique opportunity to build on the achievements made by developing a new European security architecture. An increased role for OSCE, the development of a new NATO and a special relationship between NATO and Russia are contributions to greater security for all States and will thereby further the disarmament process.

The Conference on Disarmament has reason to be proud of its contributions to these endeavours. The Chemical Weapons Convention of 1992, negotiated in these chambers, is finally in the process of entering into force. We hope that the present efforts to ensure ratification by the United States and the Russian Federation will be successful. Their participation in the global treaty-based regime to remove chemical weapons from the face of the Earth is crucial.

The CTBT, negotiated by many of you sitting around this table, is an equally important milestone in the annals of global disarmament. After the resumed session of the first CTBTO PrepCom here in Geneva, the process towards establishing a CTBT organization is now finally on its way. Norway will support the work by the Provisional Technical Secretariat to build up an effective and credible verification system within the necessary time-frame.

But substantive steps to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have also been taken outside these chambers. The successful NPT Extension and Review Conference in 1995 was a particularly important event in the efforts to curb the threat of one of the most deadly dangers to human existence - nuclear weapons. The "Principles and objectives" document from

the 1995 NPT Conference sets out a concrete agenda for the follow-up process. My Government will take an active part in the PrepCom process to strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

Tomorrow the sixth session of the Ad Hoc Group to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention will end. This process is now slowly moving in the right direction. During the next session in July, it should be possible to have more comprehensive and focused deliberations. Our aim should be to present a proposal for a verification protocol in 1998.

Regional and unilateral steps have also been important to reduce the nuclear threat. In Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia, agreements have been reached to lower the levels of armaments or to ban the development of nuclear weapons altogether. But regional conflicts have also shown the lethal impact of modern conventional weapons on civilians and refugees. As long as innocent civilians continue to die or to be maimed by arms, long after the conflicts are ended, our global disarmament agenda remains unfinished.

The question faced by the international disarmament community, therefore, is not whether there are more tasks to be undertaken in our efforts towards more stable and predictable human security. The question is which issues should be negotiated first, and how negotiations can best be structured to reach relevant and realistic objectives. The Conference on Disarmament will continue to be one key instrument to negotiate global agreements on disarmament issues, but only if it can agree on relevant objectives. If progress in the CD is blocked by the fact that States have different security interests or objectives, then negotiations will be taken elsewhere. The credibility of the CD depends on its ability to deliver concrete agreements. This credibility is damaged if the CD is used as a vehicle to block achievable progress, by making negotiations on one issue hostage to simultaneous movement on others.

Nuclear issues should and will continue to be an important topic on the global multilateral disarmament agenda. In this context, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation should not be viewed as separate processes. For non-proliferation efforts to succeed, further concrete progress must be demonstrated towards reducing the political and strategic significance of nuclear weapons in international politics.

A global ban on nuclear weapons must be the ultimate objective. The nuclear-weapons States have an obligation - enshrined in the NPT - to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in international politics. This obligation is one step in a process aiming at a legal codification of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce and eliminate those weapons.

The nuclear-weapons States must live up to this responsibility. We have consistently urged them to fully implement existing arms control and disarmament agreements. Furthermore, an early start of negotiations on reductions of strategic arsenals beyond those prescribed by START II, involving, as appropriate, also the other nuclear-weapons States, will not only contribute to a militarily safer world, but also be conducive to a more constructive and dynamic international climate. Importance should also be

attached to further reductions in tactical nuclear weapons, and to their destruction. We know that thousands of tactical nuclear weapons have been withdrawn and put into storage. These weapons must be destroyed, and not merely stored. It is important to ensure that this part of the disarmament process is also continued, as proposed in earlier unilateral declarations.

The particular responsibility of nuclear-weapon States for nuclear disarmament should not be diluted. This is why it is difficult both in political and practical terms to transfer the responsibility for negotiations on nuclear disarmament from the nuclear-weapons States to multilateral forums. We are prepared to take part in discussions on nuclear disarmament issues in the CD. But to us, it is essential that the primary responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States is not to be diverted through such a process.

Several ideas have been launched to suggest how we could proceed on a broad scale in our efforts to address the nuclear issues. Some constructive ideas have been put forward in the report of the Canberra Commission. In our own approach to the wider problems related to nuclear activities, we have two basic assumptions. Firstly, it is increasingly evident that the potential risks of proliferation are inherent in both military and civilian nuclear activities. Secondly, the international disarmament agenda should also encompass the so-called "management of disarmament". The "management of disarmament" concerns the problems relating to the implementation of nuclear and chemical disarmament processes in particular, including the secure and environmentally safe handling of material from weapons scheduled for destruction. As a response to the serious challenges posed by these activities, the Norwegian Government has drawn up a plan of action on nuclear activities and chemical weapons in areas adjacent to our northern borders. One priority area of this plan is the management, storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste. Our goal is, in cooperation with other interested States, to achieve safe, cost-effective operations under an independent control and inspection mechanism, and in keeping with internationally accepted principles and guidelines.

Negotiations on an agreement prohibiting the production of fissile material for weapons purposes should be the next major item on the agenda of the CD. After the conclusion of the CTBT this would be in accordance with the "Principles and objectives" agreed at the NPT Review Conference in 1995. A cut-off agreement is an important means of reducing the availability of fissile material. The inclusion of measures to monitor enrichment and reprocessing facilities would strengthen a "cut-off" treaty. Such monitoring could be applied without undue interference with remaining military stockpiles.

We should work towards greater openness regarding the stocks of fissile material held by nuclear Powers. As a first step, the nuclear Powers should, on a voluntary basis, provide detailed information on their stocks of plutonium and highly enriched uranium. A second step could be to ensure cooperative measures to clarify and confirm those declarations. As a third step, the nuclear Powers could permit international inspection of their stocks, with the aim of ensuring that the inventory in storage can be taken out only for non-weapons purposes. As a fourth step, agreed monitored net

reductions from these stockpiles could be introduced. Finally, as a last step in this context, consistent and stringent international standards of accounting and security for fissile materials might be established. Greater transparency is an essential confidence-building measure. Done in parallel, this would also facilitate cut-off negotiations.

The plague caused by widespread and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines (APLs) is among the most urgent humanitarian issues facing us today. The military utility of APLs is far exceeded by their cost in human and socio-economic terms in affected countries, of which most are in the third world. Every single day, APLs cause tragedies among innocent civilians. Uncleared mines and minefields prevent much-needed socio-economic development in many societies long after hostilities have ended.

Norway has been heavily engaged in mine-clearing activities in different conflict areas and, in particular, in Africa, Asia and now Europe. Mine-clearing will continue to be a priority in many post-conflict situations. We do see the need for expanding existing mine-clearing capacity, and certainly for improving mine-clearing technology. But there will always be technical, financial and other factors constraining the number of mines to be cleared every day. Today the world is losing this battle; new deployments of APLs by far outstrip present mine-clearing capabilities. For many Governments, including the Norwegian, it is increasingly difficult to justify the fact that our efforts are directed mostly towards remedial measures, after the damage is done. As always, preventive action is much more effective, and certainly much cheaper, both in terms of money and - more importantly - in terms of human suffering.

My Government has reached the conclusion that a total ban on production, transfer and use of APLs would be the only way to stop this plague. That is why we introduced a national moratorium on the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of APLs in 1995. That is why we removed and destroyed all APLs in Norwegian military stockpiles last year. Our position on APLs was reached after careful assessment of our national and allied defence needs and the humanitarian costs involved. We do know that there are military implications and costs of the renunciation of APLs. But we have found no effective, acceptable alternative to a ban on all APLs as quickly as possible.

Immediate measures to ban APLs are called for. That is why Norway welcomed the initiation of the Ottawa Process. This is a channel for like-minded countries to speedily conclude an international agreement on a total ban on APLs. This is the instrument by which we can respond to international momentum to accelerate the process towards a total ban. This growing momentum includes a steadily increasing number of Governments, parliamentarians and a strong public opinion. It is supported by humanitarian agencies and by countries affected by the APL plague. We have to exploit this momentum. We are correspondingly sceptical of any efforts that might serve to have it derailed or delayed. An agreement in the CD seems to be blocked by the fact that many members cannot - for the time being - accept a total ban.

The Ottawa Process is not universal, but is open to any country sharing the goal of an international agreement on a total ban on APLs by December this

year. The lack of universality, which seems elusive even in other forums, is not an excuse for not moving ahead. A successful conclusion of the Ottawa Process would establish a new international norm prohibiting the use of APLs. Once this norm is established, we will work to make it universal.

We would favour a text which is short and simple. It should clearly and unequivocally prescribe a comprehensive ban where the key objective is to prohibit the use of APLs. A "step-by-step" or "phased" approach which does not address this fundamental issue would not respond to the humanitarian concerns that we have.

We do not see that a legally binding ban on APLs needs traditional verification instruments as contained in disarmament agreements. We agree with the widespread view that complete verifiability is neither feasible, nor necessary, nor desirable. It is difficult to conceptualize efficient verification measures, but at the same time, it is very unlikely that it will be possible to hide the actual use of APLs.

An APL ban and mine-clearing are two sides of the same coin. Our endeavours to clear mine-affected areas should be enhanced. A clear commitment to halt deployment of APLs may in turn facilitate commitments to undertake mine-clearing.

The APL issue demands immediate action and we will continue to actively support and take part in the Ottawa Process. We look forward to the meeting in Brussels in June which will be the first session where a concrete treaty text is to be negotiated. Norway has offered to host a follow-up meeting in Oslo to facilitate the conclusion and signing of a convention on a total ban in Ottawa in December.

Within the broader global disarmament agenda, there continue to be important areas where the CD can make its contributions. We believe that there is merit in maintaining a forum like the Conference on Disarmament. Therefore, we must do our utmost to provide conditions which can facilitate constructive and concrete work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Norway for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Italy, Ambassador Vattani.

Mr. VATTANI (Italy): First of all, Mr. President, I wish to thank you for the kind words you addressed to me. I am delighted to see you in the Chair of this distinguished assembly, as the representative of a country with which Italy has maintained, through centuries, deep relations of cooperation and cultural exchanges of which I, myself, had the privilege, in a previous professional experience, to be a witness and a promoter. Your well-known professional qualities and skills at the diplomatic service of a great nation which has always played, and will play, a decisive role in the international community are a reassuring factor and give us hope to overcome the difficulties hindering, at present, further achievements in this forum. I am persuaded that your talent, insight and qualities of mediation will bring positive results and, to this end, I wish you the best success.

(Mr. Vattani, Italy)

Since this is the last time I take the floor in this distinguished assembly, I want to express, also on behalf of my Government, my warmest wishes for the progress of the activity of an organization which, particularly in the last years, has confirmed, with concrete and undeniable success, its competence as the only world forum for multilateral negotiations on disarmament. My three years' experience here will remain in my memory as a fundamental stage of research and study of the essential components of international negotiations and of their evolution, following trends and criteria always new and in continuous development. In no other situation the opportunity of perceiving the pulse of global political balances is given in such clear terms, even beyond the immediate objective of the negotiations. That is why the essence of the problems involved is bound to spill over to larger fields of interest, only apparently extraneous, and certainly influential.

I often had the impression to have chosen here something like a monastic way of life whose timetable was divided between early-morning working breakfasts, confabulations at the oratory tables, communal refectories (which made me think, sometimes, of the epicurean habits of the convents in the Renaissance times), lengthy debates, evening meditations on the most pressing concerns and spiritual exercises to keep alive an almost ascetic tolerance. A climate, anyway, of ever ongoing reflection and intellectual exercise which has kept at least my brain alert in spite of the workload, where perseverance, patience and conciliatory will were often put to the test.

Having arrived in Geneva at the time when, after a decade of efforts, the first significant agreement, following the end of the cold war, to ban chemical weapons, had been concluded, I had the opportunity, together with you all, to work on the CTBT negotiations. Such negotiations, successfully concluded, constitute a decisive event to meet the objective of a progressive containment and reduction of the nuclear threat. But looking at the immediate perspectives of the activity in this forum and notwithstanding the present difficulties for the launch of the numerous initiatives on hold, as additional potential factors for significant political successes and reaffirmation of the tasks of this Conference, I wish to recall the recent appeal of my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lamberto Dini, in this forum. He called on us to overcome divisions and obstacles, in order to satisfy the expectations of the international community, which is looking at us with great attention, and to try and achieve those results to which our moral and civil duties bind us.

Moreover, I wish to express my regret at not having witnessed the further expansion in the membership of this Conference with the admission, in particular, of my partners of the European Union who, like the Republic of Ireland, have always devoted great commitment to the cause of peace and disarmament. To them, I renew the wish to see their legitimate aspirations finally realized, as my Government has repeatedly advocated.

Leaving this room, I will bring with me more than the dark representations of human fate and destiny, painted in such daunting frescoes of a Catalan mind (frescoes that I watched at leisure from the perspective of the four angles of this table). I will bring along also more precious remembrances: the recollection of the friendship and warm human feelings I

have perceived from many partners in our daily efforts, some of whom have left in the history of this institution the mark of their strong personality. I wish to recall those who have recently left us to undertake new challenging tasks, in particular the former representative of France, Ambassador Errera, the Ambassador of Pakistan, Kamal, and the dynamic Ambassador of Germany, Hoffmann. I would also like to convey the expression of my deep esteem to Ambassador Ledogar, who, like me, is on the point of taking leave of this Conference and who, since a long time, is the dean of the diplomatic community on disarmament affairs. I do hope in my next post of assignment to have the opportunity to meet again the friends of the Conference on Disarmament, not only for the great pleasure of getting together again but also to keep alive my interest for the evolving activity of this forum which, after all, remains the best club in town.

We are on the eve of celebrating the Easter festivities, symbol of peace and reconciliation throughout the world (peace and reconciliation toward which His Holiness the Pope, John Paul II, invited us on the occasion of the World Day of Peace), and I want to address my best wishes to you all, to my dear friend Ambassador Petrovsky, to his deputy, Mr. Bensmail, and to all the members of the secretariat who, with their generous assistance, have done so much to facilitate the implementation of my commitment on behalf of my country, so devoted to the cause of a more safe, stable and prosperous world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Italy for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I should like to give the floor to the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Hofer.

Mr. HOFER (Switzerland) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you on taking up the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. The Swiss delegation feels particular satisfaction at seeing you guide our deliberations. It bears in mind the important role that you yourself and the State you represent so well are playing in our Conference. I cannot conceal from you the great hopes that we place in your presidency. We earnestly hope that it can lead to a concrete programme of work. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Pavel Grecu, chargé d'affaires of the Romanian Mission, who, thanks to his exemplary personal devotion, moved us forward by further clarifying our respective positions.

While today I will address several problems which have to do with the agenda adopted on 14 February last, I wish to confirm above all - and I reiterate here the profound conviction of Switzerland - that the Conference is faced with a priority task which is that of launching, without delay and without preconditions, negotiations on a multilateral treaty to ban the production of fissile material for military purposes. While emphasizing this priority, I think it would be useful to mention two other subjects here which reflect Switzerland's concerns.

The "Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons" will come into force on 29 April next, that is, during the inter-sessional period of this Conference. Switzerland impatiently awaits the implementation of this Convention, which is the fruit of long years of negotiations in our

institution. During these negotiations the United States of America and the Russian Federation played a crucial role, bearing in mind the enormous arsenals of chemical weapons in their possession, stockpiles whose destruction is due to be completed at the latest 10 years after the entry into force of this Convention. In this respect Switzerland welcomed the conclusion in 1990 of a bilateral agreement between these two countries on the joint verification of the destruction of their chemical weapons.

Switzerland is contributing actively to the implementation of this Convention, which it ratified two years ago. Our contribution takes the form, inter alia, of the organization of training courses for international inspectors of the future Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, OPCW/OIAC. Supported jointly by the Swiss Government and my country's private chemical industry, this course provides for training in the inspection of civilian facilities, as laid down in the Convention. In all, 76 candidate inspectors will follow the programme. The first contingent, numbering 38 participants from 30 States, began its work on 4 March last. This work will be concluded on 14 April, that is, two weeks before the entry into force of the Convention.

Following the sudden withdrawal of the United States from the OPCW/OIAC Preparatory Commission inspector training programme, Switzerland agreed to the request made by that body's Provisional Technical Secretariat to train a higher number of inspectors this month in Spiez, in the field of chemical production technology. The Swiss instructors in charge of this course were impressed by the quality, professional experience and devotion of these candidate inspectors, who have shown a remarkable spirit of teamwork. Beyond any doubt they will be able to discharge with success and professionalism the difficult task of inspector in the future international organization. The inspectors will be deployed, inter alia, in the verification of chemical weapons facilities. In this respect the candidates expressed their alarm about the fact that the two main possessors of chemical weapons production facilities have not yet ratified the Convention.

Switzerland too is concerned about the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention without the participation of the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This development brings with it not only the risk of weakening the present efforts being made in non-proliferation and multilateral disarmament, but also sends out a highly ambiguous signal to those States which have not yet finally renounced the use of chemical weapons. In this area the United States of America and the Russian Federation bear a special responsibility towards the international community. The bilateral meeting beginning today in Helsinki at presidential level might provide an opportunity to speed up the process of ratification and the implementation of the bilateral agreement we have already mentioned.

Today I am in a position to inform the Conference on Disarmament that Switzerland has the honour to convey invitations to an international seminar of experts on ballistics and its traumatic effects to all the delegations to the Conference as well as the States parties to the "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects".

(Mr. Hofer, Switzerland)

In this regard it is appropriate to indicate the framework into which this seminar falls. As you are aware, the most important conventions at present in force concerning small arms are as follows: the St. Petersburg Declaration of 1868; the Hague Declaration concerning the Prohibition of Using Bullets Which Expand or Flatten Easily in the Human Body dated 1899; the 1907 Hague Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land; and the 1977 first Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts.

We note a gap between the field of application of these international instruments and the opportunities provided by technical progress in the development of a type of munitions which formally comply with them. At this very moment the use of certain munitions violates the aim and the spirit of these conventions, to say the very least, in our opinion. We should consequently ponder how this situation might be remedied. Like the International Committee of the Red Cross, which recalled the importance of drawing up a new protocol on munitions and small arms at the time of the Final Declaration of the Review Conference on the "Inhumane Weapons" Convention, Switzerland attaches particular importance to this problem. Encouraged by other States, it has decided to organize an international seminar intended to deal in detail with questions connected with the traumatic effects of ballistics. On this subject the experts will be enabled to identify the practical effects of such weapons, taking account of the humanitarian aspects, and to carry out technical tests which will make it possible to evaluate the reference methods. Their present legal status will also be examined.

For your information, the seminar will take place in Thun on 17 and 18 September next. It will enable specialists and scientists from all over the world to discuss this subject. It goes without saying that the States parties to the "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons" as well as the States participating in the Conference on Disarmament are warmly invited to participate by sending two of their experts. For this purpose an invitation giving details about this event will be sent to the missions in the next few days. As of now my authorities are looking forward to welcoming you to Thun, near Bern.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ambassador Nasseri.

Mr. NASSERI (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am not taking the floor today to make a general statement in a written form in the normal way, but to address the situation that the Conference is in. I think that has been the focus of our attention for the last few months and shall remain, and continue to remain, the focal point of our attention until we find a final solution and come to a conclusion on how we do our work this year.

For this year and this session, work started rather early. In fact, Ambassador Dembinski, the last President in 1996, started consultations as early as when the General Assembly was meeting in New York, and this was following the desire of this Conference to try to prepare itself for the work that it needs to take up for the year 1997. Through those discussions, ideas

(Mr. Nasseri, Islamic Republic of Iran)

were raised. We have an initiative by the Secretary-General, Mr. Petrovsky, which was an interesting one. That was evolved into a proposal by our first President this year, Ambassador Sun, on the agenda for the Conference, which to us was a very interesting proposal, and we were hoping that we could have an agreement on the basis of that proposal. We had one month of discussion. We eventually came to the conclusion that perhaps the only, or at least the quickest, way to have an agreement on the agenda was to revert to the previous year's agenda and adopt it. It is not the best thing that we would have desired. We would have felt that the draft agenda presented by Ambassador Sun was more in tune with the priorities of the international community and reflected generally various resolutions that were adopted at the General Assembly. But in any case, we welcome the decision in order to ensure that the actual work can commence as early as possible. Since then, there has been a whole lot of consultation among the delegations to the Conference in various forms, and our ex-President, Mr. Grecu, even took it upon himself to go through a very lengthy process of discussing bilaterally with all delegations to see whether he can, through these consultations, this new form of consultations, come up with some suggestions and proposals as to how the work can be done.

Eventually, I believe we have now in the Conference a good collection of information as to where the positions stand. Yet we are not any closer at this point, it seems, to a final solution on the programme of work than we were two months ago. Of course, part of this is perhaps something that was anticipated. I recall that after the success of the CWC negotiations, we had to spend a few months to eventually be able to decide what would be the next step for the CD, and what would be taken up for negotiations. Therefore, it is unrealistic to assume that we should have been able to make a very quick decision right at the outset of this year's session. Yet the situation seems to be a bit different than at the time when we started CTBT negotiations. We are moving towards a situation of deep recession, hoping that something eventually will come up. But I think there is a risk that, in a sense, we are perhaps moving towards a deepening of the stalemate that exists at this juncture.

Now we are fortunate, Sir, that a person of your calibre, your qualities, your experience is taking charge of this Conference, and more than congratulating you for the assumption of the presidency, I sincerely wish to congratulate ourselves for having you in the Chair. I am certain that you are thinking, and thinking hard, and exploring ways to move forward. At least personally, I know how irritated you are about the continuation of this current state of affairs.

The approach that has been taken up so far apparently has been that there are some difficult areas and issues which we have to first resolve, and then other items on the agenda will simply fall in place. We are beginning to think that perhaps we are not taking the best and the most appropriate approach at this juncture, continuing to hope that some delegations which have some strong national positions on certain issues, which we do respect and we should fully respect, would eventually be able to show some flexibility. But simply waiting for that time, that magical time, to happen may not be the best way that this Conference can hope to be able to engage in real and actual work.

(Mr. Nasseri, Islamic Republic of Iran)

There are areas where there seems to be, at least, no objection at this stage. So in our view, perhaps it is better to concentrate on those areas, get some work started, and at the same time continue our consultations in some regulated way in order to arrive at a conclusion on other more difficult issues. It is in this light that we are proposing today, formally, a programme of work, which I assume has just been distributed. I believe it is self-explanatory. The Conference, in our view, can move immediately to establish two ad hoc committees, one on NSA, where we already have a consensus mandate, which has been the basis the negotiations of the Ad Hoc Committee in the past and is simply the continuation of those negotiations, and the other on agenda item 7, Transparency in armaments.

The Conference of course cannot limit itself to the work of these two ad hoc committees. We therefore are proposing that a special coordinator be appointed to deal with issues under item 1 of the agenda and to report to us as to what would be the best arrangement to be followed by the Conference.

The same goes for item 6 of the agenda, where we also propose that a special coordinator be appointed. Of course, this is for the programme of work as far as the items on the agenda are concerned. Consultations have been going on about appointing special coordinators on the agenda and on the expansion of the membership, which has not been mentioned here.

We should at the same time recognize that we are more or less pressed by time. That is, we cannot, for instance, have special coordinators who would report to us at the end of this year, and then we leave and come back next year and be in the same position. Therefore, in our proposal, we have suggested that the Conference will receive an interim report by the end of May and a final report no later than mid-June 1997. And mid-June means a few days before the end of the second part of the session. And there our intention is, one way or the other, to really come to a conclusion on these other issues as much as possible by the end of the second part of the session, so that at least for the third part of the session we will know where we stand.

This is our proposal. We are making this proposal, and I say it in the most sincere way, with no political agenda. We, as Iran, have been able to go along with any proposal, any proposal on the programme of work, as long as the Conference can engage itself to do some work, and not sit idle and discuss, in ways that are becoming rather intolerable, I should say the issue of the agenda and the programme of work. We would have accepted the establishment of an ad hoc committee on any of the items on the agenda. So, we are flexible, and I believe a large number of delegations here are flexible, and they simply wish to see that the Conference engages in some substantive work as soon as possible, and I think that moment has come. "As soon as possible" is not an unlimited time. That time has already arrived, and it is in that light that we are making this proposal. We hope that this does not harm any delegation's position. We think it does not, and that has been the spirit behind this. We hope that we can have an agreement on this as soon as possible. In fact, we are proposing that a decision be taken on this proposal at our next plenary.

Having said that, I have to say a few words with a very warm heart about Ambassador Vattani. I shall simply and very briefly say that this Conference is going to miss a very knowledgeable expert, a very tactful diplomat and a charming, charming personality, and for me, I can say, a very, very dear

(Mr. Nasseri, Islamic Republic of Iran)

friend. I wish him the best of success both in his professional life and also in his personal life, and I hope that he will invite us where he is going to visit him because we, as the most favourite club in town, like usually to be invited to places we go, rather than going on our own. Ciao, Alessandro.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement, for the kind words addressed to the Chair, and also for his proposal. And now I would like to give the floor to the distinguished representative of the United States of America, Ambassador Ledogar.

Mr. LEDOGAR (United States of America): I take the floor today for the last time. It is both a happy and ironic coincidence that I do so under your Presidency, Ambassador Berdennikov, given that the United States and Russia have for so many years been at the heart of what goes on in this chamber. Thus it seems to mouth the usual platitudes about how pleased I am to see you in the Chair, and how we should celebrate the progression of the alphabet, would somehow trivialize this curious circumstance.

As you pointed out, I have served in Geneva for more than seven years, and I have been fortunate enough to participate in some of the CD's most worthwhile and enduring enterprises. The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty are monuments to what this body can achieve when its members wish to do so. The successful conclusion of these treaties in effect ratifies the worth of the multilateral negotiating process, even if universal ratification of the treaties themselves may be problematic. And, we must remember, this process is all we have going for us in the global effort to reduce the level of armaments in the world and to stabilize their effect.

My sense of pride in these accomplishments is tempered, however, by growing frustration with what I can only describe as a doomed effort to force the nuclear Powers to negotiate now in this forum the elements of a disarmament process that they are conducting elsewhere. The implacable hefters of this linkage crowbar have blocked all work in this body for the foreseeable future, even work which is in the best interests of this body's members. Theirs is a self-defeating effort - one which works to the disadvantage of the entire world community. The CD is supposed to be strictly a negotiating body, but it is not immune to the laws of politics. And politics, as we all know, is the art of the possible. I can only hope, as I take leave of you, that a sense of realism will once again assert itself in the CD, and that the members will not allow it to be paralysed by unrealistic and impolitic demands. The real disarmament needs of the world community are simply too overwhelming and urgent. The CD should do what it can do, and help where it can help. It should seek to achieve again the importance that was its due in the past. It should not try to insist on the undoable.

Nuclear disarmament is happening now. It will happen more and even faster in the future. That the CD cannot for the foreseeable future have the governing role in the process in no way detracts from the importance of the CD's mission to seek multilateral arms control agreements of use to the entire world, nor from its stature as the world's only global arms control negotiating body.

(Mr. Ledogar, United States)

My seven-plus years here have been graced by close association with some of the world's sharpest and most competent diplomats. I have not agreed with some of them; in fact, at one time or another my instructions have caused me to be at odds with many of you. My style is not agreeable to many, either - a fact I recognize with an ambivalent mixture of pride and regret. I called the shots as I saw them, and I took a few hits in the process. But I can honestly say that this association, from my point of view, has never been anything less than professional and respectful, and that together we have achieved much of lasting value.

It remains only for me to thank you - my colleagues and your staffs - for the seriousness and the professionalism with which you have treated me and my delegation over the years. I also thank the interpreters, other providers of conference services and all the members of the international secretariat for their support and attention to the needs of the Conference on Disarmament in general, and of my delegation in particular. The sense of dedication to the task of multilateral disarmament which has been entrusted to the CD by the international community is manifest in the professionalism of all who work with or in this body. It speaks well for the CD, and it gives me hope that the Conference will endure and prosper.

Thank you also for your kind words addressed to me and my family, and a special thanks and mutual farewell to my friend, Alessandro Vattani of Italy.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of the United States for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I see none.

Distinguished delegates, you have heard the proposal officially introduced by the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who proposed inter alia that a decision should be taken on his proposal at the next plenary meeting. As usual, Presidential consultations will be held next Thursday with the coordinators of the groups in our Conference, and I hope that during those consultations I will be informed of the views of the groups on the proposal made by the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference, and the last of this part of the session, will be held next Thursday, 27 March at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.762
27 March 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 27 March 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Berdennikov (Russian Federation)

GE.97-60794 (E)

THE PRESIDENT: I declare open the 762nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and the last during the first part of the 1997 session.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Germany, Finland and Chile. Once we have exhausted the list of speakers for today, I intend to put for the decision of the Conference the requests of Ecuador and the United Arab Emirates to participate in our work as observers during the current session. With your concurrence, I shall put these requests for decision without first going into an informal meeting.

I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, Mr. Achenbach.

Mr. ACHENBACH (Germany): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on the assumption of the presidency of this Conference. I would like to assure you that the German delegation fully shares the view of the importance of the work that has been done in the past and that can and should be done in the future by this Conference, as expressed in the encouraging message by your Foreign Minister to the Conference. The German delegation will do its utmost to support you in the execution of your demanding office at this difficult time. At the same time, I would like to express thanks and recognition to your predecessor, Mr. Pavel Grecu, for his untiring efforts to move towards consensus on the work programme of this Conference. I am convinced that the results of these efforts, although not immediately apparent, will be more clearly seen in the future and will provide a solid foundation for you to build on further.

In the view of the German Government, it is high time that the Conference, after these lengthy and in-depth consultations, should arrive at consensus on the work programme. Germany has already stated its priorities for this work programme: the immediate start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off and on an effective, legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines. The vast majority of delegations are indeed willing to treat these items. I appeal to all delegations to free the way for concrete negotiations on these topics immediately upon the resumption of the Conference session in May. Germany is open-minded as to the wishes expressed by other delegations. In a spirit of compromise and cooperation on all sides, it should be possible to reach consensus soon.

At the beginning of this Conference session, Germany has already stressed the high priority it attaches to the early conclusion of an effective and legally binding international agreement to ban anti-personnel mines. It is an important objective of German foreign policy to eradicate once and for all, and as early as possible, this cruel and inhumane weapon. Germany has decided to work towards this objective by all effective means and in any appropriate forums.

It is in this spirit that I want to inform this Conference that on 24 and 25 April 1997 an international meeting of experts will be held in Bonn on the possible verification of a comprehensive international treaty banning anti-personnel mines. The meeting follows up on the international efforts to

(Mr. Achenbach, Germany)

achieve a comprehensive solution to the worldwide landmine problem that is satisfactory to all concerned. It is intended to help bring about as soon as possible a comprehensive international treaty banning anti-personnel mines. The Federal Republic of Germany is convinced that immediate and determined action is crucial to ensure the earliest possible success of ongoing worldwide activities to achieve a comprehensive ban on anti-personnel mines.

The Federal Republic of Germany welcomes the progress made at the international meeting of experts held in Vienna from 12 to 14 February 1997 in drafting the text of a future treaty banning anti-personnel mines. At the same time, the discussions revealed that the issue of verification - an essential aspect of any effective ban on anti-personnel mines - needs further detailed attention.

The Federal Government therefore proposes that this should be the focus of a two-day meeting of experts to be held in Bonn. The meeting will deal solely with specific technical and practical problems in this area and consider possible elements which could serve as the basis of a verification regime. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany will forward the results of these discussions to the participating States as well as to the international forums concerned with the mines problem.

A discussion of other aspects of the proposed treaty or of procedural matters - for instance, the question of the negotiating forum - is not envisaged. Nor will the meeting take any decisions on substantive issues.

The meeting of experts is open to all countries interested in an exchange of views on this question. Invitations have been extended bilaterally through diplomatic channels. First reactions have been very encouraging. We therefore look forward to a productive meeting with widespread participation that will bring us one step forward to the common goal shared by so many countries.

THE PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Finland, Ambassador Reimaa.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): Mr. President, we would like to join the previous speaker in congratulating you in your new tasks and assure you of the full cooperation of the Finnish delegation.

I have the honour to take the floor to present to you, and to this Conference, the official proposal by Finland, Chile and Poland to appoint a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines under agenda item 6.

The fact that this proposal is made by three countries representing three different geographical groups in the CD underlines the importance that many countries from all groups attach to the question of anti-personnel landmines here in the CD. During this part of the session we have used a lot of time to discuss this question. We know there still are different views and concerns regarding this issue. It is our view that the appointment of a

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

special coordinator would be the best way to start serious work to tackle and solve these questions, and so to find the most appropriate way to deal with anti-personnel landmines in the CD.

The purpose of our proposal is only to try to speed up the process of consultations and negotiations, and as the proposal says, we would expect that the special coordinator should present a report on the consultations already before the end of May 1997.

Finally, we would hope that you, as our President, could take this proposal as a neutral contribution to your activities during the recess.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Finland for his statement and for his kind words. As I pointed out, the list of speakers still contains the name of the Ambassador of Chile, but unfortunately so far he is not here, so I would be prepared now to ask whether anyone else wishes to take the floor now, and then we hope that we will succeed in hearing the statement by the distinguished representative of Chile. I call on the distinguished representative of Canada, Ambassador Moher.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): We were going to speak at the end of the formal statements this morning, but given your invitation, Sir, I would like just to mention to delegations, all of whom are aware, that Canada continues to give priority to the Ottawa Process for dealing with a global ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines. The Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, is convening today, in Ottawa, the diplomatic corps for the purpose of speaking to them on that matter, and I have been requested to circulate to all delegations here the speaking notes that he will be using on that occasion, as well as a one-page Ottawa Process "road map". As I mentioned, this is for the information of this group. It is part of our efforts to try to maintain transparency in this regard, and with your permission we will ask the secretariat to circulate that.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Canada for his statement, and now I am especially pleased to call on Ambassador Berguño, the representative of Chile.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as I congratulate you and offer you the cooperation of my delegation, I have to apologize for being late in beginning this cooperation. My intention at this point is to speak very briefly on two aspects that are at the centre of our concerns, not only today but since the beginning of this session of the Conference on Disarmament, in which a climate of uncertainty prevails and it does not appear that there can be an easy outcome despite the steadfast efforts made by your predecessors to give impetus to our programme of work. Your experience, your skill, the way in which you highlight and bring clarity and understanding to national positions encourage us to hope that we shall find a way to tackle this work programme.

(Mr. Berguño, Chile)

The proposal that the delegation of Finland has put before us with regard to the terms of reference, the criteria whereby a special coordinator might be appointed to deal with the question of anti-personnel landmines, is of great importance for the delegation of Chile. On this subject, we believe that if the coordinator is appointed under agenda item 6, it would be preferable to spell out, as in the proposal which was presented by Finland which we support, to spell out what it is for, but not to speak only of item 6. Nevertheless, whatever the wording, the question cannot be avoided. Either the Conference on Disarmament reaches the conclusion that it cannot address this issue and that it is not in a position to do so, and then clearly other processes will deal with the aspects which aim at the possible but final prohibition of these weapons which are cruel, inhuman, but which in some aspects are similar to weapons of mass destruction, because of the magnitude of the impact they have had against human life. If this happens, the problem is that this issue will be considered from the point of view of disarmament in another forum, and I think that this undoubtedly important precedent, which would then become inevitable, would not be a good precedent for the Conference on Disarmament. It is true that in the history of the relationship between international humanitarian law and disarmament law there are points of agreement and aspects where, while one element may prevail, the other element has been present since the time of the Hague rules in the last century, since the first manifestation of international humanitarian law. It also contains a first manifestation of disarmament, because it relates to the sizes of certain projectiles; there are the two facets, the strategic facet and the humanitarian facet. In so far as one of them, so to speak, takes precedence, light is certainly shed on the process, but in the view of the delegation of Chile there is no doubt that in the matter of anti-personnel landmines there is a considerable disarmament dimension and that for these aspects the most appropriate forum is the multilateral forum.

This leads me to the second part of my statement, which concerns the proposal which the delegation of Iran has placed before us and to which you, Sir, and the other delegations that are members of the Conference will be giving the consideration it deserves inasmuch as it is not only an effort of imagination but also a coherent, balanced and restrained arrangement. It is a proposal which does not satisfy many delegations. It does not satisfy my delegation. For example, Chile would have preferred, like other countries, to have in addition a reference to the question of outer space, which is of importance to us, but clearly what is being presented here is a very simple and very direct question, and that is, if the Conference on Disarmament wishes to carry out a work programme, wishes to perform a useful function, and if the corresponding answer is yes, it does want to, it is ready to discharge its responsibilities, it is ready to take up its tasks in a mature manner and in a sensible manner, we must give not just consideration but support to this proposal. This proposal includes an essential element from the perspective of the non-nuclear States, which is the question of negative assurances, and in the interests of balance it includes an aspect that has been upheld more by other countries but also enjoys a considerable measure of support, and that is transparency in armaments. This proposal realistically recognizes that the other aspects will have to be taken up by special coordinators in so far as success is not achieved in reaching the consensus that would have been

(Mr. Berguño, Chile)

desirable for the establishment, for each of these issues, of an ad hoc committee, an ad hoc committee in the case of nuclear disarmament which my delegation would certainly have desired. It seems to us that in this proposal, which we value and appreciate, there is more than a basis for negotiation, there is a basis for making progress, at least provisionally. If the Conference can begin to work on a programme structured on this basis and can continue the process of consultations, but in an already institutionalized form, in a form in which at least a positive signal has been given, an act of political will, a demonstration that the Conference wishes to continue to exist, working and performing a useful function, we should give this proposal more than consideration, we should give it support, and that is the position of my delegation.

I would conclude by saying just one thing. In earlier meetings I have said that for the developing non-nuclear countries in particular, it is more crucial than for others to keep this forum alive. But I think that this view is still a partial view, that what is really of importance is that there should exist for the international community, for the United Nations system, for the international disarmament system, a centre that can articulate and organize and is able not only to assimilate the experience of the past but to project it into the future in a programme of disarmament. That articulating centre, that negotiating forum, that multilateral consideration, can only derive from this Conference on Disarmament. If the instrument is abandoned, the process will certainly continue, and the process goes faster than the instrument, but the process will continue in a way that will not give all States the full range of guarantees of equal access to the negotiations, fuller participation in those negotiations and a universal outcome for each of the instruments negotiated. I think that is what will happen if we continue with the status quo in which we find ourselves at the present time.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Chile for his statement and his kind words.

(continued in English)

That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

As announced at the beginning of this plenary meeting, I should like to take up for decision the requests presented by Ecuador and the United Arab Emirates to participate, as observers, in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure of the Conference, in our work. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.486, which is before you. May I take it that the Conference agrees to these requests?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Consultations are still under way on the proposal made by the Islamic Republic of Iran at our last plenary meeting on the programme of work, as contained in document CD/1450. These consultations indicate that

(The President)

more time is needed to allow delegations to receive instructions from their capitals on this proposal, and therefore I intend to keep this matter under review.

I give the floor to the distinguished Ambassador of Iran.

Mr. NASSERI (Islamic Republic of Iran): I apologize for interrupting you for a moment, Mr. President, but I simply wish to ask for some clarification. As you have rightly noted, we had proposed that our proposal, now reflected in CD/1450, be taken up for decision today. I, too, have been informed that various groups and all delegations have been studying and considering this proposal. I am thankful to all of them and, indeed, I hope that this proposal, with any changes that might be agreed upon, can be adopted soon, because the intention is simply to proceed, and to proceed as soon as possible. This is not really a proposal that would become a proposal like the others and take a very long time, another session or two, before it is taken up for a decision. Therefore, when you said that you would keep this under review, could you clarify that a bit further? For instance, how would you hold consultations, when, and by when do you suppose that you would be able to refer the matter back to the CD? I know that it is a very difficult question, but anything you can say on this that will shed some light on the procedure would be useful for the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Iran for his clarifications and his question. The President is entirely in the hands of the members, and as soon as the members of the Conference are ready to take a decision on your proposal, I will be happy to put it to them. But that moment has not yet come, as was convincingly demonstrated by the consultations I had the pleasure of conducting yesterday with the coordinators of the regional groups. I will pursue my efforts to ensure that this matter is resolved as speedily as possible. The distinguished representative of Iran has the floor.

Mr. NASSERI (Islamic Republic of Iran): I should reiterate that I am fully appreciative of your efforts, Sir. If I may say so, perhaps one way to approach this would be to hold open-ended informal consultations on this proposal when we resume our session in May. I understand that it will be difficult to hold consultations on this proposal during the inter-sessional period because some members will be in New York, and others here. But I would assume that at the beginning of the second part of the session, it should be entirely possible to do this. In any case, it is difficult to gather the views of the delegations on the proposal in a haphazard way. I have heard some comments here and there, but even for us who have made the proposal, we still do not know what the views of various delegations are, and if there can be an opportunity in the form, as I suggested, of open-ended informal consultations, then that at least gives us an opportunity to evaluate how much of a chance this proposal has, because frankly, as the country that has made it, we would really like to see a decision taken soon. Whether it is approved, rejected, or amended and improved does not make much difference. Iran has now bound itself to a very compromised position through this. It does not reflect the Iranian position, and we cannot remain bound to this

(Mr. Nasseri, Islamic Republic of Iran)

proposal for a very long time. So, for that purpose alone, if not for anything else - although it is also, I think, important for the sake of the CD to have a decision quickly on this - it is important that we know how the consultations would be pursued, and I hope that the Conference and you will agree to pursue the consultations at least as a first stage to holding such a meeting.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I thank the distinguished representative of Iran for his further clarification and the proposal he has made. Personally I fully share this approach and I would like to request the distinguished group coordinators to communicate their views to me on that proposal at the next Presidential consultations, which will take place on 14 May.

On that note I shall adjourn this meeting. The next meeting will take place on Thursday, 15 May 1997 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.763
15 May 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 15 May 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Berdennikov (Russian Federation)

GE.97-61360 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I declare open the 763rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, the first of the second part of our annual session.

At the outset, allow me to extend a warm welcome on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf to our guest speakers today, Mr. John Holum, Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and Mr. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. Their presence yet again among us today will no doubt provide us with the necessary impetus as we grapple with the programme of work of the Conference. I am sure that their statements will be followed with keen interest and attention. I am personally particularly pleased to welcome the distinguished Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Gryshchenko, with whom I worked for years in the Arms Limitation and Disarmament Problems Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union. I would also like to extend a cordial welcome to the new representative of Italy to the CD, Ambassador Giuseppe Balboni Acqua, and to assure him of our cooperation and support in his new assignment.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of the United States of America, Ukraine, Egypt, Japan, Hungary, Morocco and Canada.

(continued in English)

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Mr. John Holum, Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

Mr. HOLUM (United States of America): It is an honour again to present to this body the views of the United States, and to congratulate you, Sir, for ably discharging your duties as its President. Our delegation pledges its support in the weeks to come.

I want to discuss the progress and future of arms control, and the role of this Conference, which, I believe, will depend heavily on how it handles two key issues that are clearly ripe for its resolution. The first, a fissile material cut-off treaty, would take an important step toward a world in which the risks and roles of nuclear weapons are further diminished, and our ultimate aim, their elimination, is brought closer. The second seeks to free the world of anti-personnel landmines, for as President Clinton stressed again in his message to this body in January, our children "deserve to walk the Earth in safety".

The Conference on Disarmament has the capacity to succeed in both these vital negotiations. The evidence of that is manifest in its remarkable recent body of fruitful work. The Conference reported the Chemical Weapons Convention to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1992. It has now entered into force, with the United States, I'm more than happy to say, among its original parties.

(Mr. Holum, United States)

Last year this Conference generated the text of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, extracting all the consensus that was available. The United Nations General Assembly was able to adopt it without change, thus completing a quest long and ardently pursued by some of the international community's greatest leaders.

These treaties define the Conference on Disarmament. This is the body where arms control negotiations, not merely discussions, are conducted. This is where the world's substantive expertise on arms control, not just its polemical vehemence, resides. This is where every perspective, every region, every alignment, every ideology, every interest is represented. And as a result, this is a place where treaties of true global standing are given life, treaties like the Non-Proliferation Treaty, now with 185 members; the Chemical Weapons Convention, with 165 signatories; the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, already with 144 signatories, including 41 of the 44 countries needed for entry into force.

As President Clinton made clear in his message to you this January, the United States stands ready to help expand this body of achievement. But of course the Conference itself will decide whether it will solidify its tradition of success, or perhaps commence a slide toward the periphery of international affairs.

In short, this is a year of decision for the Conference on Disarmament.

Consider the practical benefits of success on a fissile material cut-off treaty. The objective of banning the production of fissile material for any nuclear explosive device is nearly as old as the nuclear age itself. The initiatives of such statesmen as Prime Minister Nehru in 1954 and Prime Minister Trudeau in 1978 confirm the historical breadth of support for a global treaty toward that end. Indeed, for many years it was championed by the Non-Aligned.

In 1993, President Clinton placed the United States squarely on that same side of the issue. Also in 1993, the United Nations adopted a consensus resolution calling for a global, verifiable treaty to cut off the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or any other nuclear explosive device.

But this body, having agreed two springs ago to a negotiating mandate, has found itself unable to proceed because a few delegations have chosen to block consensus even to initiate negotiations.

What, in practical terms, is at stake here? Two truths are dominant. First, fissile material is the modern chokepoint, the critical-path necessity, far scarcer than bomb know-how, in building or enhancing nuclear stockpiles. Without it arsenals can neither be established nor expanded. And second, new fissile material for weapons requires reprocessing or enrichment.

So the issue squarely before this body is whether these processes, in perpetuity, will be used only for reactor fuel, for peaceful research, for medical isotopes and other non-explosive purposes, and never again for nuclear

weapons. The issue is whether we can safeguard newly produced material to guarantee that the stocks available for use in weapons will not and cannot grow.

We would codify in a global, binding, verifiable treaty, what has only lately become a practice of the nuclear-weapon States, one that is eminently reversible, one that is predicated on the relatively benign geopolitical security environment that thankfully prevails at this moment.

Keep in mind that this is a constraint specifically on the nuclear-weapon States. They will be subject to a universal upper bound on how much fissile material can ever be devoted to nuclear weapons. All their highly enriched uranium and plutonium removed from nuclear weapons and disposed of could never be replaced. All reprocessing or enrichment would be declared and subject to international verification, for nuclear-weapon States and other States alike.

Moreover, this manifestly is arms control as well as non-proliferation. It is hard to imagine how nuclear arms reductions can proceed much further without a dependable limit on the nuclear materials, without confidence that any clandestine production of fissile material will be detected.

And this step is achievable now. For the treaty should be simple and straightforward. It could be accomplished relatively quickly. And it could even make use of an existing international organization, appropriately adapted, for implementation.

So the negotiating mandate for the fissile material cut-off presents this body with a clear choice. We can continue to talk about nuclear disarmament in the abstract, or we can get on with it in practice. With every passing week that the Conference avoids this next achievable step so plainly before it, the world must wonder, on what basis would a few States have it declare an endpoint for nuclear disarmament years in the future, when it cannot even begin work on cutting off the spigot for more nuclear weapons today?

What we need is simple: a "yes" to prompt commencement of negotiations on the basis of the existing consensus mandate. By undertaking and completing this negotiation promptly, this body can make an immediate contribution to nuclear disarmament, and keep faith with the United Nations General Assembly and the 1995 NPT Review Conference, both of which assigned this work here.

There is another constituency with whom we must keep faith. They live far from the diplomatic corridors of Geneva or New York. But we must heed their pain.

In the hour or so we spend together here, a senseless and avoidable tragedy will likely strike three or four innocent human beings. Somewhere in this time, a farmer in Latin America, a child in Asia, a mother in Africa, will accidentally pull a trip wire, or press a firing pin that will detonate an anti-personnel landmine and end their lives, or blight them forever.

(Mr. Holum, United States)

Anti-personnel landmines, or APLs, have catastrophic consequences for civilian populations. They are categorized as conventional weapons, in contrast to weapons of mass destruction that can wipe out whole cities at a time. But anti-personnel landmines are wiping out the equivalent of whole cities, a few people at a time.

We have it in our power to help end this.

A year ago this week, President Clinton announced United States support for banning anti-personnel landmines. In our view the Conference on Disarmament should promptly agree to commence negotiations, and complete a global ban at the earliest possible time.

Strikingly, no government represented here is on record opposed to starting such work. So why is this body only negotiating about negotiations, when the world demands that we negotiate about mines?

Aside from the paralysing obstacle of linkage to other causes, which I will address later, four main objections are interposed to an anti-personnel landmine negotiation.

First, an APL treaty is alleged to be a humanitarian measure unfit for this body, which negotiates arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament agreements. But is not such a distinction almost entirely artificial? Disarmament measures almost invariably have humanitarian effects. For example, the Chemical Weapons Convention was propelled in considerable part by the recognition that poison gas is an especially cruel weapon that operates indiscriminately, against civilians as well as soldiers.

Moreover, the humanitarian aspects of the landmines issue are being addressed in other ways. Many countries, including the United States, are contributing to the dangerous work of removing leftover mines around the world. And last year's amendments to the Convention on Conventional Weapons did much to address the humanitarian problem of civilian casualties resulting from newly emplaced APLs. What is needed now is a bold disarmament step.

The second objection is that an APL ban may not accommodate the legitimate security concerns of some States. But the Conference on Disarmament is a body whose procedures ensure that every serious concern is seriously considered. If a concern is real and garners more than isolated support, it will likely find expression in the Conference's product.

The third bar to negotiations relates to the mandate itself. Any mandate, if unduly specific, would contain something unacceptable to somebody. A draft mandate should remain flexible as to its particulars, so long as the ultimate destination is clear. Various routes to a comprehensive APL ban might work. Negotiations evolve. We need not be immobilized today by uncertainty about how to handle every turn and bump that may appear in the road tomorrow.

(Mr. Holum, United States)

The fourth objection is that APL negotiations here would be incompatible with the Ottawa Process. But simultaneous negotiations in this body and in Ottawa are complementary, not competitive. Each makes a valuable contribution. One is quick, involving willing countries; the other is broad and deep, involving every country represented here. They both pursue the same ultimate goal. Neither process need interfere with the other. Each can augment the other.

Complementary means that Geneva and Ottawa together can save more lives and limbs than either could save alone.

Of course, the Conference need not fear that it will be bound by any particular product or method of the Ottawa Process, for this body inevitably will develop its own text in its own way.

Those participating in the Ottawa Process do so with our good wishes. So long as this Conference bends to our common task, Ottawa's momentum and success should only inspire and heighten our own.

Both of these priorities - the fissile cut-off and the APL ban - are, of course, constrained by another obstacle: the proposition that the Conference on Disarmament should do nothing else until it starts negotiating the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

I detect an assumption on the part of some here, perhaps even an expectation, that eventually the United States will come around and agree to such negotiations, or at least preparations for them, if only so other important items can proceed. So I want to be very clear. The real obstacle to nuclear disarmament negotiations here is not the willingness of the parties, but the capacity of the forum. It will not work. It will set back disarmament. We cannot and should not agree to it. That is true today. It will be equally true next year, and five years in the future.

Does that mean nuclear disarmament is dead? On the contrary, it is striding ahead. START I implementation is under way. In Helsinki, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin brought START II nearer fruition. And they set a vision for the next phase, after START II comes into force, with cumulative total reductions of 80 per cent from cold war peaks in START III, and the first agreed limits not only on delivery systems, but on the warheads themselves.

Clearly, the way to extend nuclear disarmament today is through the same painstaking step-by-step process that has produced such dramatic results in recent years. In contrast, bringing nuclear disarmament to this Conference unquestionably means halting all progress for the sake of a long argument over the ultimate destination, and when we must arrive there. Indeed, does anyone think any of our recent progress, including Helsinki, could pass muster here? Of course it would be blocked, because someone would pronounce it insufficient.

(Mr. Holum, United States)

But the strategy of linkage is even more pernicious than that. For it aims not only to bring disarmament here, and thus stall it, but would specifically deny the basis for arms control progress elsewhere.

Real gains in arms control and disarmament depend not on leverage or altruism, but on what is possible at a given moment as a matter of security. Recall that article VI of the NPT specifically places nuclear disarmament in a larger disarmament context, imposing this broader obligation on all States parties. It thus embodies the essential truth that nuclear disarmament cannot occur on demand or in a vacuum, but must be approached in tandem with broader improvements in the international security environment.

The permanent Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, are all just such improvements. The enhanced nuclear safeguards under review right now in Vienna are another, and will contribute immensely more to disarmament than every resolution ever written, and every pronouncement ever made, about how the nuclear-weapon States ought to do more. And cumulatively, all such practical advances explain the progress at Helsinki, and why further steps thought impossible just three years ago are becoming possible now.

A cut-off in production of fissile material for weapons would be another step in precisely the same direction. So countries that refuse fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations here are not only blocking one specific goal; they are undermining the prospects for the very nuclear disarmament they profess so fervently to cherish. Indeed, such an embrace offers strangulation.

So who and what are harmed as paralysis settles in on this body? The future innocent victims of anti-personnel landmines is one answer, mainly, of course, in non-aligned countries. The cause of disarmament is harmed, as tangible steps here, fostering further progress elsewhere, are stymied. And I suggest that grave damage can be done to the Conference on Disarmament itself, as its credibility, standing and effectiveness are sapped by months of inaction, foreshadowing an empty future. What an irony that would be for those States who have waited years to join the Conference on Disarmament only to miss out on its glory and share in its decline, as the real business of arms control seeks out more promising venues.

Of course we can escape such dismal prospects. But not without significant change from where we are today; not without restoration of the practical, methodical, problem-solving, step-by-step methods that have enabled this body's finest hours and greatest achievements.

Without further delay, let us return to work. Let us negotiate both treaties that are now ready for action and thus build the intertwined twin legacies of a strong Conference on Disarmament and a safer world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States of America for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko.

Mr. GRYSHCHENKO (Ukraine): It gives me special pleasure to address the Conference on Disarmament at a time when the presidency of the CD is assumed by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation - a neighbouring country which, alongside with the United States of America, is destined to play a leading role in global disarmament efforts and I would like to wish Ambassador Berdennikov every success in guiding the work of the Conference.

Last year was significant in CD activities, primarily due to the completion of the negotiations on the CTBT. More than 40 years passed before the language of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, elaborated at the Conference on Disarmament, was confirmed by signatures of more than 140 States. Out of the 44 signatures necessary for the CTBT to enter into force, only three are still missing. In this context, however, the word "only" is not quite appropriate, since these are the signatures of the States with developed nuclear infrastructure that play an important role on the international scene.

In view of the fact that conditions for the CTBT's entry into force are not subject to revision, we have to consider seriously a set of measures to provide for the Treaty's timely entry into force, since it is not excluded that the technologically perfect though expensive CTBT verification system will be established and ready for functioning while the Treaty itself still may not be operational.

We believe that those States that have not yet signed the Treaty and are thus delaying its implementation should reconsider their position. One cannot strive for a nuclear-weapon-free world while rejecting the CTBT.

After a few years of intense negotiations on the CTBT, the Conference on Disarmament is facing the difficult task of determining its future course. In spite of the adoption of the CD agenda for 1997, the Conference has become seriously stuck in the deliberations over its work programme. Three major priorities were identified by delegations: a fissile material "cut-off", a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines (APLs) and nuclear disarmament. As far as Ukraine is concerned, we would like to see all three issues in the CD's work programme for this year.

So far, the conclusion of a multilateral agreement banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices remains the demand of the time, in spite of the fact that four nuclear-weapon States have announced the unilateral cessation of such production. In past years, the process of nuclear force reduction have been actively carried out and as a result of the dismantlement of nuclear warheads, the amount of nuclear fissile materials which might be reused for military

purposes is steadily growing. The storage sites of these materials are permanent sources of environmental and terrorist threats to all nations of the world.

For this reason, we believe that the scope of the treaty should not be limited only to a ban on their production, but the possible reduction of their stocks should be considered as well. Accordingly, the title of a future agreement might be worded as a convention on the prohibition of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices and the reduction of their existing stockpiles. With such a wording, this item of the work programme of the CD would prove from the very beginning that a forthcoming instrument is intended to be a valuable contribution to nuclear disarmament.

This would undoubtedly increase the number of delegations wishing to start negotiations on this item, thus bring us closer to consensus. The scope of reduction of these materials has to be the centre of future negotiations on this issue. From the Ukrainian point of view the provisions of a future agreement must envisage the declaration of existing plutonium and highly enriched uranium stocks. To assure the universality of declarations, they might not necessarily indicate the purpose of stockpiling.

It would also be useful to establish the time-frames and rates of reduction of excessive stocks for each country concerned. The best solution would be the total elimination or reprocessing of the fissile materials for non-military purposes. The verification procedures of this agreement should be non-discriminatory and based on IAEA safeguards. Its main objective would be to monitor the declared fissile material production facilities for purposes of nuclear weapons or other explosive devices or those capable of such activities. At the same time, the procedures and technical means of verification should be adequate to enable detection of undeclared facilities producing fissile materials for prohibited purposes.

Finally, the future agreement, of unlimited duration, will not enter into force until all nuclear-weapon and "threshold" States ratify it. Therefore, we must obtain their support for early consideration of the "cut-off" issue and secure their constructive cooperation in the course of negotiations on a relevant agreement.

In recent years the attention of the world community has been concentrating more and more on the need to solve the humanitarian crisis arising from the large-scale use of anti-personnel landmines (APLs). This insidious type of conventional arms - as strikingly demonstrated in recent years - is fraught with danger for the civilian population in zones of conflict years and even decades after the end of hostilities.

Although initially APLs were designed for defence against potential aggressors, they have today become the source of terrorizing intimidation for millions of people, causing economic collapse in many agricultural countries by preventing farmers from cultivating large areas of arable land.

(Mr. Gryshchenko, Ukraine)

The First Review Conference of the State Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Certain Conventional Weapons in 1995-1996 made an important advance by adopting amended Protocol II to the Convention, which imposes rigorous restrictions or prohibitions on the use of specific kinds of APLs.

In the course of this Review Conference, however, the need for a decisive breakthrough became evident. This understanding is embodied in resolution 51/45 S, "An international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines", adopted by 155 votes with none against. In the meantime, Canada initiated the Ottawa Process which, supported by several other States, has gained strong momentum with the final objective of opening for signature by the end of 1997 a universal agreement on a total ban on APLs, including a ban on their use, development, production and transfer. We express our full solidarity with the noble aspirations of the States sponsoring the Ottawa Process and commend the results of the international meetings held in Vienna on 12-14 February and in Bonn on 24 and 25 April.

There is no doubt, however, that such an authoritative forum as the Conference on Disarmament is capable of playing and obliged to play a key role in the negotiations on a total ban on APLs. Therefore, long before the Canadian initiative emerged, Ukraine, like many other States, shared the view that the Conference on Disarmament is the best place for such talks. Even now the Conference still has a window of opportunity to prove its usefulness for solving problems requiring unordinary approaches. In this respect, the possibility of merging the Ottawa Process with talks in the relevant Ad Hoc Committee of the CD is not completely excluded.

Another approach seems to be more realistic: without competing with the Ottawa Process, the CD might complement it by negotiating a multilateral international agreement banning the production and transfer of APLs. We are convinced that the number of States supporting such an agreement would be larger and would include those States which still rely upon APLs to enhance their defensive capability.

Moreover, taking into consideration the CD's experience in the elaboration of the verification procedures of the Chemical Weapons Convention and of the CTBT, this forum might well in future start elaborating the compliance and verification procedures of the agreement on a total ban on APLs, which hopefully will be open for signature by the end of this year.

The inclusion of the issue of nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament's work programme for the current year was actively discussed during the first part of the Conference.

Today it is difficult to state publicly opposition to the idea of complete nuclear disarmament. The final document entitled "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" adopted at the 1995 NPT Extension and Review Conference emphasizes the necessity for the world community to make more active efforts in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. In article VI of the NPT the nuclear States confirmed their commitment to the

(Mr. Gryshchenko, Ukraine)

continuation of negotiations seeking effective measures in the field of nuclear disarmament. The Conference therefore has the relevant mandate for elaborating a programme of nuclear disarmament and determining concrete steps for its implementation.

In broaching the problem of nuclear disarmament, I cannot help but recall the exceptional contribution of Ukraine to this process. Having inherited the third largest nuclear potential, after the collapse of the USSR, our State took the unprecedented decision to completely eliminate these weapons. It is worth mentioning that, though it may have happened by chance, the beginning and the conclusion of nuclear disarmament in Ukraine coincided with the beginning and the completion of the work on the CTBT in the Conference on Disarmament. Hence, from Ukraine's perspective, complete nuclear disarmament is an achievable goal and it is necessary to find adequate ways in which to consider the issue at the Conference.

We welcome the "Proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons", submitted on 7 August 1996 to the Conference by His Excellency Mr. Zahran, Ambassador of Egypt, on behalf of 28 States of the Non-Aligned Movement, in which separate stages are to be implemented in a precisely determined time framework. We support this document and propose to adopt it as a basis for further work. Ukraine also highly appreciates the conclusions and recommendations made in the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

As to practical nuclear disarmament, the results already achieved in the course of the reduction and elimination of strategic offensive weapons are of the utmost importance.

To a considerable extent this was due to the fruitful work of the Joint Compliance and Inspection Commission (JCIC) under the START-I Treaty, where Ukraine, as an equal partner of this multilateral implementation body, contributed to the positive trend towards global nuclear disarmament.

One more key element promoting this trend is the ABM Treaty. Preserving the viability of this Treaty, through concluding a final agreement on the demarcation of the strategic ABM and TMD systems, has remained in the focus of the negotiations in the Standing Consultative Commission during the last few years, where our State participates as an equal partner as well. We expect the parties playing the pivotal role in nuclear arms reduction to make further steps to take all possible measures for the START-II Treaty's entry into force, to continue the dialogue in order to work out and conclude a new agreement on further drastic reductions in strategic offensive weapons - START-III. As soon as the provisions of START-III are implemented, it is necessary to begin negotiations among nuclear-weapon States to reach a further level of nuclear arsenal reduction and then their complete elimination.

At this later stage, the Conference on Disarmament would have to play a decisive role in elaborating a convention on the complete prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. To prepare the ground for this important work

(Mr. Gryshchenko, Ukraine)

Ukraine supports the creation of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to be engaged in elaborating concrete agreements on nuclear disarmament and not to be used as a forum for stating truisms on its importance and urgency.

These could be the previously mentioned treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, including the limitation of their excessive stocks, or a multilateral agreement on the commitment of all States - nuclear and non-nuclear - to strive for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Therefore, before creating such an ad hoc committee, it is necessary to prepare a list of issues for its deliberation.

In this connection, we find very pertinent Japan's proposal to nominate a special coordinator on nuclear disarmament. Ukraine endorses this idea and considers it to be realistic.

In our opinion, Egypt's proposal concerning the mandate of the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, which was tabled just after the conclusion of the first part of this year's session, deserves serious consideration as well. Obviously, the idea to conduct negotiations in the framework of this ad hoc committee, both on the issues of the programme on nuclear disarmament and the "cut-off" treaty, is undoubtedly productive and would help the CD in its attempts to achieve a compromise concerning the work programme for the current year.

The multilateral agreements in the field of arms control and disarmament are the fruit of the Conference on Disarmament's activity and the Conference has every reason to be proud when these pacts enter into force and become part of international law. Recently the Chemical Weapons Convention, on which the CD had worked for two decades, entered into force. This will inspire us to fruitful and effective work in future.

Last year's enlargement of the CD's membership will also contribute to this. The main motive for Ukraine in entering the CD was our desire to improve the work of this forum, to embrace a wider range of issues on its agenda and to achieve results that meet the high expectations of the world community, and we are ready to actively cooperate with other delegations to achieve this goal.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, allow me at the outset to express to you the congratulations of the Egyptian delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and our support for the consultations that you are carrying out so competently on the programme of work of the Conference. I would also like to express my delegation's gratitude to your predecessors, Ambassador Joun Yung Sun of the Republic of Korea and Mr. Pavel Grecu of Romania, for directing the work of the Conference so capably throughout the first part of our 1997 session

and also for the consultations they conducted during their presidency. I would also like to welcome the new representative of Italy in the CD, Ambassador Giuseppe Balboni Acqua. I listened with interest to the statements made by Mr. John Holum, Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and His Excellency Mr. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Before making my statement on nuclear disarmament, I wish to emphasize the fact that Egypt's position on all the topics on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament has already been clarified in Egypt's statement before this important body, which is the sole forum for multilateral negotiations on disarmament, at the beginning of the session of the Conference in January 1997.

A few weeks ago the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons held its first session in New York. The Chairman's paper adopted at the end of that session reaffirmed "the commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to the determined pursuit of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons and of the commitment by all States to the achievement of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control". That synopsis is consistent with the provisions of Decision No. 1 on "Principles and objectives" adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. We are all aware of the fact that the NPT is a key international instrument to curb both vertical and horizontal proliferation. Hence, emphasizing one while marginalizing the other would detract from the credibility of the Treaty. I do not need to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Egypt to the cause of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It is our view that a global non-proliferation regime to be implemented in phases would lead to the attainment of a world free from nuclear weapons.

From this perspective, and until the realization of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, which is humanity's best assurance against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, we reaffirm the commitment of the international community to the universality of the Treaty with no exceptions. In addition, the credibility of the Treaty requires all of us to engage in serious multilateral negotiations to provide non-nuclear States with security assurances and safeguards. We also deem it essential to achieve equilibrium through a commitment by all countries to honour their obligations under that Treaty. Unless this is achieved, the non-proliferation regime would benefit some at the expense of others while excluding yet a third group which has not yet acceded to the Treaty.

After the NPT Review Conference adopted its decision on principles and objectives on 11 May 1995, we expected agreement to be reached in the Conference on Disarmament on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to begin negotiations in this forum on that subject, to which we accord the highest priority, as reflected in the final document adopted at the 12th Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held at New Delhi in April. We regret, in particular, the view expressed during the

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

first part of the session of the Conference by some nuclear-weapon States that the issue of nuclear weapons should be handled exclusively by those who officially possess them. This view stands in stark contradiction with what was decided at the 1995 NPT Review Conference and raises questions concerning the true value that those States attribute to the decisions adopted without a vote at that Conference.

If nuclear disarmament is to be the exclusive concern of the five nuclear-weapon States alone, what is to happen in the case of the nuclear weapons that might be in the possession of other States which are not parties to the NPT and therefore have no legal obligation not to possess them? By the same token, we are concerned by the unsatisfactory implementation of article VI of the NPT, which stipulated, when it was signed in 1968, that the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament would take place at an early date. This has not yet been achieved almost 30 years after the signing of the NPT.

While recognizing the tangible endeavours that are being made by the United States and the Russian Federation, as well as the positive bilateral commitments they have made in the field of nuclear disarmament, we also believe that it will be possible to remove this issue from the international disarmament agenda only when the total elimination of nuclear weapons has been achieved. To achieve this objective, much work needs to be done at the Conference on Disarmament in its capacity as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. In keeping with this belief, Egypt has contributed to numerous proposals concerning the mechanism for negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. Bearing this in mind, the delegation of Egypt has submitted to the Conference a working paper, distributed in document CD/1453 of 1 April 1997, proposing a draft mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to be established in the Conference on Disarmament.

That paper invites the committee to begin negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament with a view to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. It also calls for the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices, since we regard this matter as a disarmament measure within the framework of the nuclear disarmament programme in accordance with the decision on principles and objectives adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. In discharging its functions, the ad hoc committee will take into account the proposed programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted in document CD/1419 by 28 members of the Conference from the Group of 21, as well as any other proposals and future initiatives in this regard. Egypt holds the view that the proposed mandate for the ad hoc committee constitutes a balanced and flexible text which in no way prejudges the views of any delegation, and hopes that an agreement will soon be reached on this matter in order to enable the Conference to begin its long overdue work on this important issue. Therefore, I would like to request you, Mr. President, to include that Egyptian working paper in the consultations that you will be holding with members of the Conference, together with any other paper or proposal for the CD programme of work.

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

I would now like to turn to our regional concerns in the Middle East in order to reaffirm the importance of achieving universal adherence to the NPT. In this connection, we welcome the latest accessions to the Treaty by the United Arab Emirates, Djibouti and the Sultanate of Oman, which brings all the States of the Middle East within the scope of the Treaty with the sole exception of Israel, which, in turn, should adhere to the Treaty. Israel's continuing refusal to accede to the NPT creates an imbalanced situation and is giving rise to serious security apprehensions concerning the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, which would threaten the safety and security of all the peoples of the region, including Israel. It also undermines all the efforts that are being made at the international and regional levels to promote confidence-building measures, particularly the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, bearing in mind President Mubarak's initiative concerning the establishment of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. For the speedy establishment of this zone, all countries in the region which have not yet done so should accede simultaneously to all relevant treaties - the NPT, the CWC and the BWC.

The adoption of a resolution on the Middle East by the 1995 NPT Review Conference and the fact that it was the only resolution concerning a specific region is a clear expression by the States parties to the Treaty of their concern over the seriousness of the situation in the Middle East resulting from the existence of ambiguous nuclear policies and unsafeguarded nuclear facilities in Israel endangering regional and international peace and security. Therefore, all States parties to the Treaty, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, have an obligation to cooperate and to exert further efforts to ensure the full implementation of that resolution. The role of the depositary States in particular in shouldering their primary responsibilities as co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East is crucial in accelerating the implementation of the said resolution. The delegation of Egypt to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference submitted a paper on behalf of all the Arab States parties to the Treaty (NPT/CONF.2000/PC.1/5) in which it reiterated the urgent need to assess the situation in the Middle East and to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the resolution on the Middle East with a view to the adoption of recommendations by the Preparatory Committee pertaining to ways and means to ensure the full implementation of the resolution and to ensure that all the parties concerned take the practical and urgent steps required for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. According to the formal statement by the Chairman of the first session of the Preparatory Committee, Ambassador Patokallio, time will be allocated at the second session for a discussion of the resolution on the Middle East.

Furthermore, the delegation of Egypt, together with other Arab delegations, presented a working paper to the last substantive session of the Disarmament Commission (UNDC) on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That paper was divided into two parts. The first expressed our views on the meaning of the phrase "on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned"; while the second gave an overview of the efforts exerted by the Arab States for the

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. However, despite the willingness demonstrated by the Arab States to discuss substantive and practical arrangements for the establishment of that zone as well as a verifiable Middle East zone free from weapons of mass destruction, and to refrain from taking any measures incompatible with the achievement of these objectives, Israel is continuing to oppose any discussion of these issues in any forums, particularly at the regional level. In this regard, I would like to make it clear that the expression "arrangements freely arrived at" should not be interpreted in such a way as to allow a single State in the region, namely Israel, to continue enjoying exemption from the application of the international norms. Such a situation would be inconsistent with concerted efforts to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

We say "no" to those who would condone such a situation in favour of any country of the region. While international sanctions are being imposed on other countries under the provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter, we say "no" to double standards and selectivity in any international forums, whether in the field of human rights or in the field of disarmament in regard to nuclear or any other weapons of mass destruction.

In conclusion, Egypt has presented a number of proposals and has taken positive steps aimed at achieving a world free from nuclear weapons in order to ensure security and stability for the survival of mankind. Our position is derived from a deep-rooted conviction that peaceful coexistence, peace-making and peace-keeping are the only way to save mankind, protect the environment and ensure respect for all fundamental human rights, particularly the right to life and to health for present and future generations. Hence, there is a need to create an appropriate environment in which all resources can be devoted to the prosperity of our peoples, particularly by mobilizing all the resources needed for economic and social development in the developing countries instead of engaging in an arms race which will lead to further tension and a proliferation of conflicts between countries and peoples.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Kurokochi.

Mrs. KUROKOCHI (Japan): Mr. President, it is a great pleasure for me to see you presiding over the Conference on Disarmament and I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation. I would like to express my delegation's warm welcome to Mr. John Holum, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency of the United States, and Mr. Gryshchenko, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, and thank them for their very important contribution. My warm welcome goes also to Ambassador Balboni Acqua, who recently joined us.

The current international situation provides a favourable environment for further progress in disarmament. Indeed, there have been a number of encouraging developments even since the negotiations on the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) concluded last year. Thus it is all the more disappointing that the Conference on Disarmament could not reach an agreement on a concrete work programme during its first session. My delegation would

(Mr. Kurokochi, Japan)

stress that its second session must not be a mere repetition of the first, but should reinvigorate disarmament efforts so that further progress might be achieved as expeditiously as possible. Indeed, the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, has a particularly important role to play in addressing various issues confronting the international community.

So far in 1997, the international community has witnessed progress in disarmament relating to both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons.

Concerning nuclear disarmament, first of all, substantive work for the establishment of a verification system under the CTBT gets under way with the inauguration of the CTBT Provisional Technical Secretariat. The early establishment of a verification system is important in order to deter any country from conducting nuclear testing, as well as to expedite the entry into force of the Treaty. Japan, for its part, is actively participating in the work of the Preparatory Commission in Vienna. Moreover, on 25 April the Government of Japan submitted the CTBT text to the Diet for ratification.

Secondly, we note with satisfaction the result of the first Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which was held in New York just last month. At that meeting, many delegations emphasized that the new review process was qualitatively different from past practice. Thus, while important decisions were made on procedural matters, the participating States discussed, in depth, substantive matters relating to the operation of the Treaty and produced a Chairman's working paper. We consider this a very positive step and hope that the preparatory process will continue to proceed smoothly so that we can agree on forward-looking, action-oriented recommendations for the 2000 Review Conference.

I should like to add that Japan noted with great interest the statement made collectively by the five nuclear-weapon States, as well as the individual reports of nuclear-weapon States at the PrepCom regarding the concrete measures they have taken for nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It may be recalled that United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 G, which my country sponsored, requests nuclear-weapon States to inform the international community of the progress made in nuclear disarmament. We believe that increased transparency in nuclear disarmament will contribute to building confidence between the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Thirdly, we welcome the new commitment made by the United States and Russia at the recent summit meeting in Helsinki to engage in further talks on the reduction of strategic forces in the context of START, and look forward to seeing concrete measures in this regard. In this context, Japan strongly hopes that Russia will ratify START II as soon as possible.

Moreover, in February this year, the Treaty of Tlatelolco celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its opening for signature. As described in the Chairman's working paper, which I already mentioned in relation to the first

(Mr. Kurokochi, Japan)

PrepCom of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, important steps have been taken since 1995 to conclude additional nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. We welcome this progress and will continue to follow further developments with great interest in the belief that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, enhances global and regional peace and security.

Turning our attention to developments relating to other weapons of mass destruction, we note that the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force on 29 April, and heartily welcome its ratification by both the United States and China on 25 April, thus making them original States parties to the Convention. We would like to urge other countries which have not yet done so to ratify this important treaty as soon as possible.

With regard to verification measures for the Biological Weapons Convention, we are encouraged by the result of the recent Ad Hoc Group meeting in which a general convergence of views emerged to prepare a rolling text by the next meeting in July.

Some noteworthy disarmament developments have also been made with regard to conventional weapons. Perhaps most encouraging is the fact that the tide of support for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines (APL) has become irreversible. Japan, for its part, will spare no effort to contribute to the international efforts to address the dreadful problems caused by APLs. The Tokyo Conference on Anti-Personnel Landmines, which Japan hosted in March to explore mine clearance measures, is just one example of such efforts.

In addition, we are of the view that it is important for us to realize, as soon as possible, the entry into force of Revised Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which strengthened prohibitions or restrictions on the use of anti-personnel landmines. At present, the Diet of Japan is deliberating this Revised Protocol II, as well as Protocol IV to the CCW prohibiting "blinding laser weapons".

International efforts to elaborate ways and means of strengthening and further developing the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms are now under way. In March of this year, the Panel of Governmental Experts met to commence work on a report to the United Nations Secretary-General. The Tokyo Workshop in May considered various aspects of the issue of transparency in armaments. We look forward to seeing the further development of this Register.

A number of developments have been recorded following the second meeting of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms in January. In addition to the meeting held in South Africa last September, the Central American Workshop was held in El Salvador in January, and the Asian Workshop will be organized at Kathmandu this month. Furthermore, Japan, also, will host a workshop on small arms in Tokyo this month. We believe that these regional meetings will ensure that the report to be produced at the third meeting of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts in July will prove to be a useful and important document.

(Mr. Kurokochi, Japan)

Against this background of ongoing international efforts in arms control and disarmament, it is somewhat strange that the Conference on Disarmament has not yet begun its substantive work this year. It is important that the Conference agree on a programme of work as soon as possible during this second session. My delegation continues to believe that the Conference should take up the following three tasks, namely, the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), the establishment of some mechanism on nuclear disarmament, and the setting up of an ad hoc committee on anti-personnel landmines.

The member States of the Conference on Disarmament, with very few exceptions, support the commencement of negotiations on an FMCT based on Ambassador Shannon's report. At the first Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the need for immediate commencement and early conclusion of such negotiations was also reaffirmed. Thus we believe that the linkage between the start of the negotiations on an FMCT and the progress of other issues must be abandoned, and that the Conference should start the FMCT negotiations immediately.

My delegation would like to see both the nuclear-weapon States and G21 delegations take more flexible positions on the issue of nuclear disarmament. We hope that the Conference will agree to appoint a special coordinator on nuclear disarmament, as we proposed at the first session, who would guide our examination of the role the Conference might play in this issue.

Concerning APLs, while Japan considers the so-called Ottawa Process to be a valuable initiative to keep momentum on the issue, we are of the view that the Conference on Disarmament is an appropriate forum for negotiations on a treaty which could cover all key countries and hence be effective in solving the problem caused by APLs. The establishment of an ad hoc committee in the Conference for this purpose is thus an urgent task. In my delegation's view, it would not be necessary for us to seek a detailed mandate for the ad hoc committee as this might prejudge the modality of negotiations. It would be sufficient if we succeed in producing an agreement to establish an ad hoc committee to negotiate, in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly resolution last year (and I quote), "an effective, legally binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines".

In order to make a contribution in this regard, Japan, together with Hungary, would like to submit a new proposal on a draft mandate for the ad hoc committee, which is attached to the text of my statement which was just distributed. I would like to request you, Sir, to be good enough to distribute this proposal as an official document of the Conference, and my delegation hopes that this new proposal will be considered favourably by other delegations.

If we cannot reach an agreement on an ad hoc committee immediately, we should, as proposed by Finland, Chile and Poland, appoint a special coordinator to facilitate this effort.

(Mr. Kurokochi, Japan)

My delegation is fully aware of the importance of our task during this second session, and will spare no effort in contributing to its successful outcome.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Japan for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary, Ambassador Náray.

Mr. NARAY (Hungary): Mr. President, allow me first of all to join other speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am convinced that your well-known diplomatic skills and wide experience will significantly contribute to the successful conclusion of our ongoing debates on the adoption of a work programme and the establishment of the subsidiary bodies. I thank you for your efforts undertaken until now to this effect.

My delegation's short statement today is devoted to the question of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. This issue is high on the disarmament agenda of my Government. We share the concerns of the international community at the grave humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of the large-scale indiscriminate deployment of these lethal weapons. Hungary is firmly committed to a total and comprehensive ban as the most effective solution to the global landmine crisis. This stance was further developed by a corresponding resolution of my country's National Assembly adopted in December 1996. The legislature requested the Government to pursue this objective and to support the related initiatives at the various multilateral forums.

Hungary has contributed to the Ottawa Conference and its follow-up meetings as a participant and welcomes the progress made in this framework. We believe that this process has helped to create and maintain the necessary momentum to promote the cause for a total ban. We reiterate our support for the complementary and mutually reinforcing character of the efforts made in different forums.

At the same time, it is our well-considered position that the Conference on Disarmament has an indispensable role to play in the concerted efforts aimed at the conclusion of an effective legally binding international agreement to ban worldwide the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. Based on this approach the Hungarian delegation decided to join its efforts with those of the delegation of Japan and table together with it a draft negotiating mandate. The document just submitted by Ambassador Kurokochi on behalf of our two delegations draws on operative paragraph 1 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S and, for that reason, we believe it could serve as an acceptable basis for further negotiations and discussions in this body and perhaps attract widespread support.

Let me conclude by expressing my delegation's sincere hope that this proposal will be given serious consideration by the members of the Conference on Disarmament. Though our clear preference is for the early establishment of

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

an ad hoc committee with a negotiating mandate, we can also go along with the proposal to initiate the process by the appointment of a special coordinator to conduct consultations on the modalities of the future negotiations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Hungary for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco, Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. The Kingdom of Morocco, which has excellent bilateral relations with the Russian Federation, is pleased to see a diplomat of your skill and experience taking over the task of chairing our proceedings, and I can assure you of our cooperation. Allow me also to thank your predecessors, Ambassador Sun of South Korea and Mr. Pavel Grecu, Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Romania. I should also like to welcome our Italian colleague and say that I listened very carefully to the statements by Mr. John Holum of the United States and the Deputy Minister of Ukraine.

The year 1996 was a pivotal year in the history of the Conference on Disarmament. After long and difficult negotiations the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty was concluded. The Kingdom of Morocco signed the Treaty on 24 September 1996 in New York. Nevertheless, my country feels that it is urgent to strengthen the international legal machinery to combat nuclear proliferation as well as that for nuclear disarmament.

The end of the cold war, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which gave to that treaty the permanence it had been lacking, and the conclusion of the CTBT constitute significant advances for international peace and security. However, while we should welcome positive achievements, we should not minimize the scale of the task remaining. In this context, nuclear disarmament remains an absolute priority for the international community. Nuclear weapons arouse apocalyptic visions and prompt legitimate fear in public opinion. The history of the use of nuclear energy for military purposes is also that of the collective dread it has engendered. As Montesquieu wrote, "opinions are shaped not by the mind but by the heart". The responsibility we bear today is to find an adequate response to the fears and apprehensions of the international community. It was long argued that the possession of nuclear weapons was justified for the purposes of nuclear deterrence, that those weapons, however dreadful they may have been, contributed to international peace and security. The world has profoundly changed since then. The cold war which for a long time crystallized the principal global strategic stakes is now over. Major efforts have been made in the field of nuclear disarmament within the framework of a reinvigorated American-Russian dialogue. My country, which believes deeply in the virtues of dialogue and consultation, is happy to see the idea of peace gradually replacing competitiveness and the escalation of the arms race.

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

The efforts made in the American-Russian negotiations must be welcomed with great satisfaction. They reflect a real will to work towards nuclear disarmament. They would be strengthened if they were supplemented by a multilateral, complementary approach which, without calling into question the achievements of the American-Russian dialogue, put them on a truly universal footing. The Conference on Disarmament, the sole United Nations negotiating body in the field of disarmament, could make an effective contribution to this noble cause within the framework of a committee on nuclear disarmament. No one should minimize the difficulties associated with such an enterprise, but every long-term policy contains an element of dreaming and Utopianism. Today's dreams will surely become the realities of tomorrow. This is not just wishful thinking. The Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body which should not prevent us from setting ambitious objectives because we know that the expectations of the international community are real. While our goals should be ambitious, our approach should be constructive and pragmatic.

In our view this approach could be based on the following elements. First of all, the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body and not a debating chamber. Consequently, on the basis of issues of shared concern we should commence negotiations leading to the conclusion of conventions on specific problems, particularly in the field of nuclear disarmament. Secondly, to carry out its task in an effective manner, the Conference on Disarmament requires a truly universal basis. The reform of the United Nations is a matter of great topicality. The Conference on Disarmament cannot exempt itself from the thinking currently under way in this respect. Naturally, consideration of the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament would be worth while only if accompanied by real political will on the part of all to work towards this goal. Thirdly, consideration should also be given to the efficiency of the working methods of the Conference, and perhaps more ingenuity and originality should be displayed in defining innovative negotiating structures. As experience in the last two years has shown, the Conference is all too frequently paralysed by the political divisions of another age.

It would no doubt be possible to continue for weeks on end to debate such important issues as the advisability of negotiating a ban on fissile materials, a phased programme of nuclear disarmament or a ban on anti-personnel landmines. At all events the Moroccan delegation will display the necessary flexibility on these three issues which are of concern to us and will do what it can to contribute to the emergence of a consensus on these issues. However, the real issues surely lie elsewhere. What Conference on Disarmament would we wish to see emerge as we approach the year 2000? What should be the role of this body? What can its new methods of work be? Is its membership truly representative of the world in which we live today? Is its agenda really well adapted to the new international situation following the disappearance of the East-West conflict? These are all issues which I feel require reflection and response. These matters may appear to be simply procedural. In the past they were used to block progress. Yet they are directly linked to the current stalemate. This is why my delegation feels it is urgently necessary for this thinking to begin. Otherwise we run the risk of continuing our discussions within a frozen setting and on the basis of outmoded political divisions, without any real prospects of success.

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

It is undeniable, for example, that the political groups, as they exist today within the Conference, no longer reflect the new realities of the international system - everyone can recognize that fact. Similarly, the functioning of our groups engenders a kind of bloc logic which you hear referred to over lunch every day, whose consequences are detrimental to the smooth operation of our Conference. Perhaps the time has come to establish fresh bridges, to breach old taboos, to initiate courageous and innovative dialogues between political groups whose composition and functioning would more faithfully reflect the outlines of this new world gradually emerging before our eyes. I would like to take solely as an example the proposal just made by the Japanese delegation, or the one made at the end of the first session by the Iranian delegation, or the proposal by Egypt; perhaps we can see emerging a degree of transparency which scorns the group approach; in any event we must raise the question of new working methods. This is perhaps a new transparency which we should welcome, but it is also a subject for thought which we must address.

To ponder the future of the CD should in our view be a priority objective. Such thinking could enable the Conference to emerge from the slow death described by several speakers in which it appears intent on plunging. More than ever we need to make sure that this body does not become a kind of moribund machine reminiscent of those vivid but factual descriptions of the League of Nations described with irony by the writer-diplomat Albert Cohen. We have an obligation to achieve results, and we must succeed together in carrying out this process of reflection which I call on you to engage in regarding the future, the role, the make-up and the necessary reform of the procedures of the Conference. The task which awaits us and remains to be accomplished in the field of disarmament is immense and manifold. The stakes will be complex and the difficulties numerous. For its part, the Kingdom of Morocco continues to believe in the virtues of dialogue and consultation and remains attached to the international rule of law. Beyond differences of view, this Conference should be able to continue to exist, to develop conventions which will enable us to live, each day increasingly, in a safer world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Ambassador Moher.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): Mr. President, it is a pleasure to resume our work under your guidance. We look forward to a productive second part of our 1997 session of the Conference in the coming months. We also wish to welcome our distinguished visitors, Mr. Holum of the United States of America and Mr. Gryshchenko of Ukraine.

During the first part of our 1997 session, Canada made its views known on the CD agenda and work programme. With that discussion and decision behind us, at least temporarily, we should now move quickly forward. We appreciate that there are different views on the scope and detail of a comprehensive work programme, but three issues have emerged at the top of just about everyone's list: nuclear disarmament, FMCT and landmines.

(Mr. Moher, Canada)

On the first, nuclear disarmament, we welcome the statement that emerged from the Helsinki summit that will propel the two nuclear-weapon States with the largest nuclear arsenals towards even further reductions. The joint call by the United States of America and the Russian Federation to conclude START II and to engage in immediate negotiations thereafter toward START III is most welcome. Our expectations have been raised and we will want to follow developments closely to ensure they are fulfilled. And we look forward to the early engagement by the other three nuclear-weapon States in an extension of that process.

We also welcome the outcome of the recently concluded first Preparatory Commission of the strengthened review process for the NPT. The document which emerged from that PrepCom demonstrates that States parties have indeed created a qualitatively new and enhanced review process. As a result of the progress on substantive issues, we will have in place for the second Preparatory Commission next year a set of documents which will provide the basis for substantive work to be carried on as we move towards the Review Conference in 2000. Canada was especially satisfied at the wide range of issues on which States parties have already expressed consensus, including calls for progress on universality of the Treaty, early entry into force of the CTBT, negotiation in the CD of a cut-off convention, nuclear disarmament, nuclear-weapon-free zones, security assurances, the IAEA 93 + 2 programme and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This success bodes well for future work in the NPT context and ensures that next year's session can begin where this one left off.

While the NPT process remains for Canada the primary forum where nuclear disarmament issues are discussed, it is not, nor should it be, the only forum. The CD has unique strengths and capabilities, not the least of which is its ability to discuss and ultimately define and negotiate on issues that should be the subject of multilateral negotiation. In this context, Canada has identified nuclear disarmament as a central issue that the CD must address. We have called for the establishment of a mechanism, an ad hoc committee if you will, for the substantive discussion of nuclear disarmament with a view to identifying if and when one or more specific dimensions thereof should be the subject of negotiation. The CTBT was one such example. We have also said that negotiations already endorsed by this body, i.e. on cut-off, should be immediately pursued on the basis of earlier agreement. We continue to believe that the successful conclusion of the an FMCT would be a positive multilateral contribution to the dynamic pursuit of our nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives. Flexibility in deciding upon mechanisms to pursue this work remains desirable and several approaches could be considered. Moreover, it remains essential to recognize that, while issues in one field are relevant to others, progress on any specific measure should not be conditional on progress in any other.

The next issue is anti-personnel mines. On 21 January and again on 6 February we made our views known on the general issue of APMs in the CD. We continue to be prepared to work in this body on APMs; but the mandate for doing so must be clear and it must complement the ongoing work of the Ottawa Process, not be a transparent effort to compete with or dilute the Ottawa Process. That Process, we emphasize, is the demonstration of a

straightforward commitment by those countries currently in a position to do so to implement United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S. Based on our analysis of the positions of many in this body, it is our understanding that the CD as such is not able to agree to such a comprehensive mandate implementing fully that United Nations General Assembly resolution. We acknowledge that reality.

Given that understanding on our part, but recognizing the desire of many to explore the prospects for some work on anti-personnel landmines in this body, I do confirm that Canada does not object to the appointment of a special coordinator to conduct consultations as proposed by Finland, Chile and Poland at the end of the first part of our 1997 session. May I also, at this point, particularly welcome the Japanese-Hungarian proposal made here this morning.

Let me reinforce that last point by emphasizing that, should members of the CD wish to undertake work on a specific dimension of the broader anti-personnel landmine issue, we are willing to consider such proposals in an open-minded way. This includes the idea put forward by some that the CD might undertake to negotiate a ban on the export, import and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, although we must admit to having reservations at this point about the desirability and viability of such a mandate. But, as already noted, we are willing to see this idea (among others) fully explored by a special coordinator.

Having set out these views, I emphasize that Canada for its part remains totally committed to the Ottawa Process objective of concluding, for overwhelmingly humanitarian purposes, a legally binding agreement to be signed in December 1997, to ban the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of AP mines. The comprehensiveness of that mandate, including specifically use, remains the critical factor. The commitment of others is growing. Successful meetings in Vienna and Bonn, and an extensive range of efforts on a regional level, are contributing to this momentum. We look forward to the Brussels high-level meeting in June and the conclusion of negotiations in Oslo in September. The Government of Austria continues its admirable effort to refine and adapt its draft treaty text which provides a solid basis for work in the Ottawa Process. We are determined to proceed without interruption to meet the objective of signing the treaty in Ottawa in December and thereafter of working towards the widest possible acceptance of that text. Intensive work on the global APM scourge is well under way and widely supported. We welcome the participation of all in a position to do so to participate in the Ottawa Process to attain its clearly set objective this year.

In January, Canada put forward its views on a draft provisional agenda for our work. We circulated at that time a list of provisional items which, subject to further consultations on organizational and related arrangements, we considered could constitute a basis for moving ahead. This draft provisional agenda captured our views on the issues I have already discussed. It also elaborated our views on conventional disarmament and the need for the CD to consider the negotiation of a legally binding instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space. For the sake of brevity, I have attached a summary of our proposals to the statement this morning and request that this attachment be made an official document of this Conference.

(Mr. Moher, Canada)

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the work done in the Ad Hoc Group dealing with strengthening the BTWC. We look forward to the next session of the Group in July which will initiate work on a "rolling text" basis in order to conclude a legally binding instrument that will strengthen our confidence in compliance with the Convention, including through the establishment of an effective verification regime appropriate to dealing with a weapon of mass destruction.

Finally, Canada welcomes the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention on 29 April. The decision of the United States of America to proceed with ratification of the Treaty is most welcome. We also note the recent decision of China to ratify the Treaty. We call again on the Russian Federation, as the only declared possessor of chemical weapons not yet to have ratified the Treaty, to do so at the earliest possible moment. As a step in that direction, we welcome the political commitment by the Russian Federation contained in the letter by President Yeltsin before us today in document CD/1454.

In conclusion, let me assure you of my delegation's willingness to contribute to your ongoing efforts to get the CD working constructively on the issues before us.

Mr. ACUÑA (Chile) (translated from Spanish): On behalf of my delegation, I have asked for the floor to express, before the Conference, our delegation's support for the proposal made by Japan and Hungary concerning a mandate for an ad hoc committee on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines.

Mr. BALBONI ACQUA (Italy): First of all, Mr. President, I want to thank you for your welcome, and I thank also the other colleagues for the kind words addressed to me this morning at the beginning of my assignment. I join other speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I arrived in Geneva a few days ago and I have to deal with issues which I fully believe have a decisive political importance and a strong impact on current international affairs.

After my arrival, the problem of the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines is one of the issues that in particular attracted my attention. I wish therefore to express my Government's interest in the early conclusion of an effective and legally binding agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. I add that the Italian Government is thoroughly engaged in promoting in the Italian Parliament early approval of a national law on the matter.

I am aware that this Conference in the present circumstances is facing difficult challenges. I wish to express my hope that on the important issue of APLs, as well as in other matters under our attention, it will be possible to attain concrete results in the months ahead.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished delegate of Italy for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

(The President)

(continued in Russian)

And now, in my national capacity as representative of the Russian Federation to the Conference on Disarmament, I have the honour to inform you that the Russian President, B.N. Yeltsin, sent a message to the first session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons now taking place in The Hague. The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation also sent a message to the session.

In his message the Russian President emphasized that Russia welcomes the entry into force of the Convention. In the period leading up to ratification of the Convention, Russia intends to refrain from any actions which would detract from the purpose and goals of the Convention. Since the time of signature, the President says in his message, we have honoured and will continue to honour our obligations not to develop and not to produce chemical weapons, not to transfer them directly or indirectly to anyone, not to use chemical weapons, not to carry out any military preparations for their use or to assist, encourage or induce anyone to engage in any activity prohibited under the Convention, and not to use chemical riot control agents as means of warfare. We have taken steps to ensure that toxic chemicals and their precursors are developed, produced and acquired, stored, transferred and used only for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. Preparations are also under way in Russia for the actual destruction of chemical weapons. Federal legislation for the elimination of such weapons has been adopted.

In its appeal the State Duma notes, inter alia, that it has embarked on the process of ratification of the Convention with the intention of completing the process if possible by the autumn of this year if the necessary conditions are met. Noting that difficulties involved in the ratification of the Convention stem from the exceptionally serious economic situation in Russia, the Duma emphasizes that, from the point of view of completion of the process of ratification of the Convention by Russia, it is important that in its decisions, the OPCW Conference should take into account the issues of significance for our country, such as the possibility of extending the deadlines for elimination of chemical weapon stocks, the procedure governing payment for inspection activities, the conversion of former CW production facilities and an increase in financial assistance.

The Russian President in his message also stated that Russia would be prepared to provide OPCW with information on its stocks of chemical weapons and their location and to take part in measures to provide assistance where possible in CW protection through economic and scientific technological cooperation. Both the President and the State Duma reaffirm Russia's readiness to maintain close relations with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, during this period of transition, which must presuppose the establishment and functioning of machinery giving Russia an opportunity to participate in the drafting and adoption of decisions taking into account its political and defence interests and would also create conditions for Russia's entry into OPCW in such a way that it could immediately play a full role in the organization's activities. It is hoped that the considerations set forth in this document will meet with

(The President)

understanding and that constructive decisions will be taken thereon. This will certainly facilitate ratification of the Convention by the Russian Federation.

I have requested the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament to distribute the message from the Russian President and the appeal by the State Duma as official documents of the Conference. I understand that they are now in the hands of delegations as document CD/1454.

(continued in English)

With regard to the programme of work of the Conference, the consultations that I have held with individual delegations and group coordinators indicate that more time is needed to allow delegations to consider the proposal made by the Islamic Republic of Iran, as contained in document CD/1450, and the one made by Chile, Finland and Poland in document CD/1452. As you remember, at our last plenary meeting, on 27 March, Ambassador Nasseri of the Islamic Republic of Iran made a procedural proposal to the effect that informal open-ended consultations be held on his proposal when we resumed our session in May. This proposal was the subject of the Presidential consultations yesterday. At these consultations, however, no consensus appeared on this procedural proposal. There was a feeling that more time is needed for groups in order to take a position in this regard. It also appears that while there is, in general, no opposition in principle to holding informal open-ended consultations, the subject matter of such consultations is not yet decided upon, while at least one Group felt that this subject matter should not be confined to the Iranian proposal. I therefore urge all delegations to give serious consideration to all proposals before us so that we may be in a position to advance our process at the next Presidential consultations.

I see the representative of Kenya wishes to take the floor. I give you the floor, Madam.

Mrs. MOGAKA (Kenya): As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor during your presidency, Sir, allow me to express my delegation's gratitude at the skilful manner in which you are guiding our work. I requested the floor today on behalf of the G.21 to briefly address the proposal tabled today by Japan and Hungary. As this is the first time that this proposal has been drawn to the attention of our Group, the Group is asking for more time to consider this, along with all the other proposals that are before the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Kenya for her statement and for her kind words. If there are no other speakers, I shall adjourn this meeting.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 22 May 1997, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.